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THE LIVES OF THE RAKES

VOLUME IV

THE HELL FIRE CLUB

BY E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR

THE LIVES OF THE RAKES

VOL. I

"OLD ROWLEY"

VOL. II

THE RESTORATION RAKES:
BUCKINGHAM, ROCHESTER, DORSET,
SEDLEY, ETHEREDGE, WYCHERLEY

VOL. III

CHARTERIS AND WHARTON

VOL. IV

THE HELL FIRE CLUB:
SANDWICH, DASHWOOD,
WILKES, CHURCHILL, ETC.

VOL. V

"OLD Q" AND BARRYMORE

VOL. VI

THE REGENCY RAKES: THE REGENT,
HERTFORD, HANGER, ETC.



MEDMENHAM ABBEY.

(frontispiece.)

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THE LIVES OF THE RAKES

THE HELL FIRE CLUB

BY

E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR,
M.A., F.S.A.



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FOREWORD

THE rakes treated of in this volume differ from those whom we have met before in that they all belonged to a society which has given its name to them as a body: they are the Rakes of the Hell Fire Club, and as such are here grouped together. But as in all clubs there are to be found men differing largely among themselves in their claims as characteristic members of the special society to which they have been elected, so the rakes here exhibited were not by any means all equal in profligacy or general viciousness. For instance, it would be quite unfair to place such a man as Selwyn in the same class with a Dashwood or a Sandwich, or to pretend that a more or less gentle delinquent like Robert Lloyd could compete in the robust vagaries of a Wilkes or a Churchill.

Some of the Hell Fire Club rakes made such a name in other respects that their fame has become almost national, like Churchill and Sandwich and Selwyn; while Wilkes is perhaps the most outstanding personality in politics of his day. Whitehead

and Lloyd and Dashwood are not so well known, and the rest may be said not to be known at all.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to concentrate on their characters as rakes, and I have therefore more or less disregarded (although it was not possible wholly to ignore them) their claims as politician, poet or patriot, as the case may be.

For those who want to know more about these men there are plenty of special authorities, as well as the general annals of the times in which they lived, and to these (and I have indicated some of them in the foot-notes) I would refer the reader whose curiosity may have been awakened by what I have said in the following pages.

E. B. C.

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CHAPTER I

THE HELL FIRE CLUB

" Eke was he friar of Medmenham,
And lived in orthodoxy,
And when he could not pray himself
The monkey was his proxy."

THUS wrote the Rev. Thomas Huddesford when, resting for a time from the graver labours of writing the lives of those learned antiquaries, Leland and Hearne and Anthony à Wood, he amused himself by inditing the parody of the old ballad of St. George in which the quatrain appears. The place he indicates is that beautiful spot on the river which is known at least by name to most people ; the incident he adumbrates is one connected with John Wilkes, one of the outstanding spirits of that famous fraternity with which the name of Medmenham will be for all time connected.

Of all the great religious houses which once congregated along the banks of the Thames from Richmond and Syon to Oxford and Godstow, none is so well remembered as that monastic establishment, once a dependency of the Cistercian Abbey of

Woburn,[1] whose ruins stand midway between Marlow and Henley, and not far from the Lady Place at Hurley on the other bank, where the Revolution of 1688 was concerted and planned. But, after all, the place is quite a subsidiary one, so much so indeed that at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries the return made of it revealed the rather surprising fact that there were but two monks left in it, that the buildings were in a state of ruin, and that the value of the moveable contents was but £1 3s. 8d. Thus, neither its size nor its condition was such as to make it in any way outstanding. The fact is, its fame, or perhaps one should rather say its notoriety, arose from quite other causes than that of being a fruitful gathering for Henry's harvesters, and for all practical purposes (alien enough as they were from its original intention) its annals begin in the eighteenth century, when the property came into the possession of Sir Francis Dashwood, who here inaugurated that Hell Fire Club with which what remains of its ancient walls is now wholly identified.

It is a curious and rather significant fact that the name of the Hell Fire Club immediately connotes that of Medmenham Abbey. Curious because there were during the eighteenth century quite a number of eponymous associations, with

[1] Founded in 1145 by Hugh de Bolbec, whose ancestor possessed Woburn and Medmenham at the time of the Domesday survey.

which however not a single place where their meetings were held is now associated. There were indeed such fraternities in Scotland and Ireland just as there were in England; even certain gangs of smugglers went by this name; while in London itself there had been at least three Hell Fire Clubs, all of which were suppressed in the year 1721, the members of which met even in the then royal palace of Somerset House and at houses in Westminster and in Conduit Street; and it was of one of these that the Duke of Wharton (with whose amazing career I have dealt in the preceding volume in this series) was a member.

There is a curious and interesting description of these 'Hell Fires,' as they were called, as well as of a not dissimilar association known as the 'Bold Bucks,' in a contemporary news-sheet dated February 20th, 1720, which is worth quoting at length :—

"The principles of the first" (The Bold Bucks), says the writer, "are to come up to the flaming lust of their worthy patrons, from whom they take their denomination by their examples; they attempt all females of their own species promiscuously—grandmothers and mothers as well as daughters; even their own sisters fear their violence and fly their privacies. Blind and bold love is their motto, and their souls' faculties strictly terminated in a participation of entertainment and judgement with brutes.

"The Hell-Fires, you may guess, aim at a more transcendant malignity, deriding the forms of religion as a trifle with them, by a natural progression from the form they turn to the substance; with Lucifer they fly at Divinity. The third person of the Trinity is what they peculiarly attack; by the following specimen you may judge of their good will: *i.e.*, their calling for a Holy-Ghost-pye at the tavern, in which, by the bye, you may still observe the propriety and justice of God's judgement on them that blasts the advantages of their education so as to make this shocking stupidity to be the poignancy of their wit, and the life they lead the sublimity of their genius. Such is their disposition; the next things to be remarked are their education and usual place of conference. Their education then, after the care of tender parents and their initiation into the liberal arts, is proposed to be finished in an academy; (do not mistake me) not a scholastic, schismatical one, but a riding one, where obsceneness, curses, blasphemy, exclamations with revolving regularity meet each curvet of the more rational animal. Their usual place of conference in full council is a diminutive tavern not far from thence, where the master and cook may perhaps in time hear something from a Magistrate for striking in with the rakes' blasphemous jests and supplying them with cards and dice on Sundays."

An incident recorded in the *Original Weekly*

Journal for May 21st, 1720, may be directly traced to these associations :—" On Wednesday night last about twelve," we read, " there was such a great riot in Windmill Street, near the Haymarket, that near 100 gentlemen and others were all engaged at one time, some with swords and others with sticks and canes, wherein abundance were dangerously wounded ; the watchmen that came to put an end to the affray were knocked down and barbarously used ; at last the patrol of Horse Guards came, and finding them obdurate rode through them, cutting all the way with their swords ; yet we hear of none that were killed upon the spot, though many it is thought cannot recover from their wounds. When they saw their own time they gave over ; and upon summing up the matter, the quarrel began at first by two chairmen only." In this case, even were it as is here surmised, there is little doubt that it was the readiness of such bands as the members of the Hell-Fires to take up disputes of this kind, even if they did not actually originate them, that developed a broil between two men into a riot, in which numbers of the idle and profligate were only too willing to join.

At last the influence of such clubs became so alarming that it was determined to issue a proclamation for their suppression, and in consequence a royal edict to this effect was published on April 28th, 1721, directed specifically against " certain scandalous Clubs or Societies of young persons who

meet together, and in the most impious and blasphemous manner insult the most sacred principles of our Holy Religion, affront Almighty God himself, and corrupt the minds and morals of one another."

As a kind of postscript to this proclamation we find the following passage: "His Majesty has been pleased to give orders to the principal officers of his Household to make strict and diligent enquiry whether any of His Majesty's servants are guilty of the horrid impieties mentioned . . . and to make report to His Majesty." This is said to have been aimed at the Somerset House branch mentioned above.[1]

There is no reason to doubt that these drastic governmental measures were at least for a time successful in putting an end to the nuisance, at any rate in London itself; and if such clubs did continue to meet, it was *sub rosa*, and their orgies were confined to four walls, and were in the nature of secret gatherings.

It will thus be seen that the famous Hell Fire Club, with which Medmenham Abbey is associated, was no new or original idea: it was but a recrudescence amid rural surroundings of what had taken place in various centres in London; but it says no little for its protagonists' notoriety that of all these associations it is the only one which has

[1] See *The Hell Fire Club, kept by a Society of Blasphemers. A Satyr, most humbly inscribed to the Right Honourable Thomas, Baron Macclesfield, Lord High Chancellor*, 1721.

come to be known to others than those who have made, or make, a special study of the social life of the eighteenth century.

The annals of the Hell Fire Club, by which I mean the association of Medmenham, are scattered throughout all sorts of contemporary books and pamphlets emanating from all kinds of pens. References to it are to be found in innumerable memoirs and letters, and especially of course in the lives of those who were members of the fraternity and who otherwise made a name in the world, like Churchill and Wilkes, Lord Sandwich and Paul Whitehead and Robert Lloyd. In the *History of the Tête à Têtes* the career of its founder, Sir Francis Dashwood, afterwards Lord le Despencer, will be found described; in *Nocturnal Revels, or the History of King's Place,* by a Monk of the Order of St. Francis, is a description of the Abbey and its precious inmates; from *The Town and County Magazine* for 1769 something can be gained; while in the pages of Walpole and Wraxall references more or less important are contained. There is one book, however, forgotten now-a-days, but which in its time enjoyed a great vogue, wherein is given a long and detailed notice of what went on (as least as much of it as would bear printing) by the banks of the Thames at Medmenham Abbey. That book is *Chrysal, or the Adventures of a Guinea,* written by an Irishman named Charles Johnstone, who professed to give " a dispassionate account of

the most remarkable transactions of his time all over Europe," and first published in 1760. So great was its success that several editions quickly followed,[1] and it was not difficult for those *au courant* with the fashionable society and scandal of the day to trace the lineaments of actual people beneath Johnstone's periphrases. In that age of caustic and clever satire *Chrysal* took a high place among such productions, and if some of its records are rather highly coloured there is little doubt that it is substantially correct in its implication. Mystery nearly always begets exaggeration, and that there was no little mystery about the doings at Medmenham is quite certain. In view of the shameless publicity of some of the earlier Hell Fire associations, this should perhaps be accounted to it for righteousness. At the same time it resulted in much being attributed to it of which it may have been guiltless, although what is definitely established is quite sufficient to stamp it as a highly immoral, profane and indecent society.

Wraxall is notoriously a spiteful annalist, but what he says of the Hell Fire Club is substantially correct. Premising that Sir Francis Dashwood "far exceeded in licentiousness of conduct anything exhibited since Charles II.," Wraxall pro-

[1] There was a third edition in 1762, and others followed in 1768, 1771, 1775 and 1783, while it was at least once reprinted in Ballantyne's *Novelists' Library*, edited by Sir Walter Scott in 1822. A key to the characters appeared in Davis's *Olio of Bibliographical and Literary Anecdotes*, published in 1814.

ceeds: "He had founded a society denominated from his own name, 'the Franciscans,' who, to the number of twelve, met at Medmenham Abbey, near Marlow in Bucks, on the banks of the Thames. Wilkes was a member of this unholy fraternity, of which he makes mention in his letter to Earl Temple, from Bagshot, in September 1762.[1] Rites of a nature so subversive of all decency, and calculated by an imitation of the ceremonies and mysteries of the Catholic Church to render religion itself an object of contumely, were there celebrated as cannot be reflected on without astonishment. Sir Francis himself officiated as High Priest, habited in the dress of a Franciscan Monk, pouring a libation from a Communion-cup to the mysterious object of their homage. Churchill, in his poem of *The Candidate*, has drawn him under this character at Medmenham."

As I shall be saying something more particularly about the characters and careers of the various members of the fraternity later on, I need not here anticipate the part taken by Dashwood in the Medmenham orgies. It will be sufficient to state that the number of members was twelve, besides the Superior, and that they are each said to have borne

[1] The letter to which Wraxall refers is undoubtedly that written by Wilkes on 5th October (not September), 1762, and dated from the Red Lion at Bagshot; it is given in Almon's *Correspondence of Wilkes*, and in it the writer speaks of coming "from Medmenham Abbey, where the jovial monks of St. Francis kept me up till four in the morning."

the name of an apostle. They consisted of Sir Francis Dashwood, Sir Thomas Stapleton, Sir John Dashwood King, Wilkes, Charles Churchill, Paul Whitehead, Robert Lloyd, Bubb-Dodington, Sir William Stanhope, Lord Sandwich, Benjamin Bates and George Selwyn; while a certain Sir John d'Aubrey was once or twice introduced, but was regarded as too young to become a regular member, so that at least some respect seems to have been had for youth if not for public opinion.[1] As will be observed, some of these were not only notorious but famous men, at least in their time, and if it is only in the former category that we can place Dashwood and Dodington and Sandwich (although even they all held high political office), certainly under the latter Wilkes and Churchill and Selwyn are to be included.

Having rented the disused Abbey of Medmenham, whose situation as it then was is described by Tooke in one of his notes to Churchill's poems as being " remarkably fine, with beautiful hanging woods, soft meadows, a crystal stream, and a grove of venerable old elms near the house," Dashwood and his companions proceeded to convert it into a luxurious retreat. The walls were covered with hangings, suitable furniture was installed, the cellars were filled with the choicest wines, the

[1] One Henry Lovibond Collins is mentioned as a member, and no doubt there were others whose names are not forthcoming; but the number seems to have been restricted to twelve at one time, in addition to Dashwood the permanent Superior.

larders groaned with delicacies. In fact, everything was done to reconstitute the place rather as it must have been in its earlier times than in those pre-Dissolution days, when two poor monks led there a precarious existence amidst surroundings which were the reverse of sybaritic.

The members of the fraternity were divided into two orders—superior and inferior. Into the chapel, where mysterious rites like those of the *Bona Dea* of ancient Rome took place, no servants were permitted to enter, and for the excellent reason that, had they been, it would probably not have been long before the secrets of what happened were made known, and the peculiar character, Pompeian in their audacity, of the mural and other decorations revealed to a curious world, with the result that even in that very lax period the long arm of the law would probably have reached to the rural fastnesses of Medmenham.

According to the author of *Chrysal,* the initial idea of the community was due to Sir Francis Dashwood, whom he describes as "a person of flighty imagination," and who, he adds, "possessed of a fortune that enabled him to pursue these flights, cloyed with common pleasures and ambitious of distinguishing himself among his companions, resolved to try if he could not strike out something new that should at the same time please his own taste and do honour to his genius. . . . The mere gratification of the senses in their utmost

extent," he remarks, " not answering his designs, he had recourse to the assistance of imagination to enhance them. The great *butt* against which men of pleasure play off their art, is Religion."

Thus it was that by an admixture of indecency and profanity Dashwood contrived to indulge his unregarded hours ; and he had little difficulty in getting certain choice and daring spirits to join with him in elaborating that notorious club whose name has managed to outlive those of nearly all such associations of, as Johnson once phrased it, " good fellows meeting together under certain conditions." There was once an idea that this fraternity had a certain political significance, but I don't think there is anything to substantiate this. It has been said, in fact, that it was formed as a support to Frederick, Prince of Wales, in his antagonistic attitude to his father ; and the presence of the egregious Bubb-Dodington as one of its members might perhaps have lent colour to this assertion, as well as the neighbouring presence of Prince Fritz at Park Place, Henley.[1] But this assertion cannot be based on any better grounds than the not unusual ones of giving a political complexion to any club which was formed in days when people had an interest in attributing such reasons to such gatherings. No ; there is little doubt that the origin of the Hell Fire Club was as

[1] It has been asserted that the Prince was actually a member of the Hell Fire Club, but I cannot find this substantiated. He was living at Park Place from 1738 till his death in 1751.

I, on *Chrysal's* authority, have stated, and that not politics but a certain pruriency, which found an outlet in the impious imitation of religious observances, was the motive of its inception. Those mock celebrations at midnight of mysterious and very pagan rites had little to do with the hereditary antagonism of the Guelphs or the wider political questions to which that antagonism gave rise.

Over the chief entrance were inscribed the famous words which had been the motto of the Abbey of Thelème, founded and endowed by Gargantua at the suggestion of Friar John, the *Fay ce que tu voudras*, which is probably the best remembered sentence in Rabelais's prose epic. And the inhabitants of the modern copy (if a ruined abbey with restricted accommodation could be said to be a copy of a place which possessed nine thousand odd bedrooms) of Thelème seem to have lived up to the injunction in every possible way. Indeed, everything was permitted but work : *Aude, hospes, contemnere opes*, was written up at the end of one passage, and figures of appropriate deities inciting to ease and pleasure were to be found at various spots. The wit of some of the inscriptions was but a poor substitute for their lack of decency and restraint. In *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit* will be found a description of many of these decorations, which the greater restraint of our times prevents me from particularising. There, too, we

read of temples and alcoves adorned with suggestive statues of Venus and other amatory deities, over whose forms were apposite, if not exactly appropriate, legends in French and Latin. It reads rather like Suetonius's description of the Capri of Tiberius, with Dashwood as a sort of later incarnation of the fanciful Emperor, and Paul Whitehead, his steward and secretary, as a latter-day Sejanus who had forgotten the affairs of state in the affairs of the senses.

To such a society as this was *Chrysal's* master introduced, and it is in that curious book that may be read of all sorts of strange doings and unholy rites—rites and doings suggested in Churchill's lines:

> "Whilst womanhood, in habit of a nun,
> At Medmenham lies, by backward monks undone;
> A nation's reckoning, like an alehouse score,
> Whilst Paul, the aged, chalks behind a door,
> Compell'd to hire a foe to cast it up;
> Dashwood shall pour, from a communion cup,
> Libations to the goddess without eyes,
> And hob and nob in cider and excise."[1]

Wilkes once wrote a curious description of the church at West Wycombe, which Dashwood at a later day erected in expiation of his Medmenham follies. The author of the *Essay on Woman* found

[1] So run the lines in Churchill's *The Candidate*, and Churchill should have known if anyone did what went on at Medmenham. The last line is an allusion to Dashwood's bringing in an excise bill on cider in the House of Commons, a bill which is said to have led to the fall of Bute's ministry.

it no doubt a congenial task to set down such things as his description of the entrance to a certain temple in the grounds of Medmenham Abbey—an entrance constructed architecturally in a way never before or since attempted, one imagines. Indeed, his account is not very dissimilar from the description in *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, in which collection of satirical pieces it is included. But Wilkes is careful not to be too outspoken, and he hints at things "not to be mentioned," as he says.

Although we are not so squeamish as were our immediate forebears, yet one cannot somehow help sympathising with Tooke, when he writes in 1854, in a note to the lines I have quoted from Churchill's poem, thus :

"That brutes, and men little above them, should wallow in the lowest depths of sensuality may be subject for pity, but never of surprise ; but that men of rank, station, and understanding should voluntarily degrade themselves by similar excesses to a level with wretches whom they must despise, should rouse the honest indignation of every man who feels an interest in the sovereignty of reason and in the dignity of human nature."

There is no gainsaying these sentiments ; unfortunately, human nature is so constituted that neither education nor rank is capable of contending against inborn characteristics ; and statesmen and scavengers are alike in this : that they are the

victims of inherent tendencies, and education only serves to accentuate the trouble. It is probable that all the members of the Hell Fire Club were as familiar with Aristophanes and Petronius and Juvenal as with Rabelais and Brantome, and the actual records as well as the suggestiveness of such writers doubtless helped to influence the minds of those who, had they not had these advantages, might have gone through life in happy ignorance of much dirt, except what they found during their daily avocations in the roads and sewers.

Some extracts from *Chrysal* will help to indicate the sort of thing which went on at Medmenham. It is probably a far more reliable picture than has been given elsewhere ; and there seems little doubt that Johnstone, its author, must either have gained the knowledge he displays concerning the *arcana* of what Sir Walter Scott once termed that " infamous institution " from one of its members, or else must have contrived an introduction to some of the meetings when the Eleusinian mysteries of the *Bona Dea* were in preparation and progress. That the author purposely disguised the actual features of the spot where the Order of St. Francis foregathered is proved by his description of the place :—

" In the middle of a large lake upon his " (Dashwood's) " estate, there was an island, the natural beauties of whose situation had been heightened by every improvement of art. On this island he

erected a building exactly on the model of the monasteries which he had seen in other countries, and to make the resemblance complete there was not a vice that he had ever heard imputed to the inhabitants of them for practising which he did not make provision in his. The cellars were stored with the choicest wines, the larders with the delicacies of every climate, and the cells were fitted up for all the purposes of lasciviousness, for which proper objects were also provided." Twice a year, for the duration of a week, this abode was filled with those *monks* who had been chosen by Sir Francis Dashwood to be the associates of his impious rites. " He selected from among his intimates," proceeds Johnstone, " a number equal to that of those who had been at the first chosen to inculcate the Religion which he designed to ridicule, whose names they assumed, as he with equal modesty and piety did that of the divine author of it. And to supply any decrease in this number by death, or desertion from the terrors of reflection, he instituted an inferior order of as many more, chosen also with the greatest caution and regard to the latitude of their principles, their fortunes, and mirthful accomplishments."

The duties of these subordinate members were to attend on their superiors during the celebration of the mysterious rites which took place in the chapel, whose decorations, " the ceiling being covered with emblems and devices too gross to

require explanation to the meanest capacity," would have betrayed to ordinary servants, and thus to the world at large, the nature of what went on within the four walls on which were painted " the portraits of those whose names and characters they assumed, represented in attitudes and actions horrible to the imagination."

With the following condensed final extract we learn how the club was broken up :—

" There had been a competition between Chrysal's master and another of the members for admission into the higher order of wickedness, in which the latter gave way, seeing that the former would be preferred to him on account of his superior rank ; but he secretly arranged to have his revenge at the banquet which followed. He had contrived in the night to bring into the chapel a great baboon, ' dressed in the fantastic garb in which childish imagination clothes the Devil,' and there shut him up in a large chest. To the spring or lock he fastened a cord which he drew under the carpet to his own seat, and there brought the end of it through a hole made on purpose, in such a manner that he could readily find it, and by giving it a pull open the chest and let the baboon loose whenever he chose, without being perceived by the rest of the company. While Chrysal's master was blasphemously praying, in the perverted forms of Holy Writ, to the being whom they served to come among them and receive their adoration in person,

he pulled the cord and let the animal loose, who, glad to be delivered from his confinement, gave a sudden spring upon the middle of the table. They concluded he was the being they had invoked. Terrified out of their senses by this thought, they all roared out with one voice: 'The Devil, the Devil,' and starting directly from their seats made towards the door, tumbling over one another and oversetting everything in their way. When the trick was perceived, the member who had practised it was expelled from the society. But the affair had become known in the neighbourhood; the baboon had been seen in his dress before he was caught, and a formal story was spread abroad that the end of these meetings was the worship of the Devil, who had often been seen at them in a variety of shapes. The superior, whose seat was in the neighbourhood, found it necessary to dissolve the society and convert the building into a pleasure-house, where he entertained his friends; besides this, he built a church on an eminence near his house, which served the double purpose of convincing the populace of his regard for religion, and of making a beautiful termination to a vista which he had just cut through a wood in his park."

It is generally supposed that it was Wilkes who played this monkey-trick on the society. Even if this be so, I don't think that remarkable man's apologists can have any special cause to disclaim the accusation. Wilkes, although a member of

the Medmenham set, was not a very frequent attendant at their orgies, and he may conceivably have regarded such an exploit as one likely to bring about the suppression of the society. He was far from being a saint, but at the same time he was a man of much common sense if not of genius, and he must have recognised that if the occasional excursions into such vagaries might be condoned, a systematic indulgence was likely to re-act unfavourably on at any rate his own character as a political personage. Be this as it may, the incident brought to an end the existence of the most notorious of those eighteenth century clubs in which indecency and irreligion went hand in hand.

It has been objected that the pictures drawn of the Order of St. Francis (it was apparently only later that it was called The Hell Fire Club) in the pages of *Chrysal* are overdrawn. Indeed, Langley in his *Hundred of Desborough* is inclined to discredit them altogether. But his conclusions are rather ostrich-like in their endeavour not to see by the easy method of closing the eyes ; for after making enquiries of the old woman who had been the only female domestic employed at Medmenham, he writes that " all their transactions might well be buried in oblivion," which is hardly a logical way of supporting his contention. Sir Walter Scott, on the other hand, remarks, " that when all exaggeration has been deducted from this singular work, enough of truth will remain to incline the reader to

congratulate himself that these scenes have passed more than half-a-century before his time."

Johnstone expressly states that the characters he draws are 'general' ones. As much may be said for the incidents he records, no doubt,[1] but there is not the least hesitation in saying that the Order of St. Francis existed, and that its members indulged in orgies which have left an indelible stain on their names. Some of those members, as we shall see, were men whom a stain more or less was not likely to sully, because their characters were maculate enough in themselves; others possessed great attainments, whose record such blemishes were hardly sufficient wholly to spoil; but they all for the nonce indulged in acts of which even the worst of them in their sober moments could not but be ashamed.

[1] He describes the Abbey as standing on an island, which of course is not, and never was, the case.

CHAPTER II

SIR FRANCIS DASHWOOD, LORD LE DESPENCER

A DRASTIC division of the members of the Hell Fire Club would result in their being grouped under two headings—the known and the unknown. The first would again have to be sub-divided into those who were famous and those who were merely notorious. If we run through their names, what I mean will be apparent. For instance, by far the most celebrated was John Wilkes. Following close on him in this respect is Charles Churchill, one of the most remarkable satirists in our literature, but whose name has for some reason become rather obscured in these times. Then there was that remarkably witty person, George Selwyn, who flits through the most decorative portion of the eighteenth century, as Sydney Smith does through the first half of the nineteenth; both names familiar as household words, both men the sayers of innumerable good things, both destined to carry in addition the burden of so many other people's good things; but the incidents of whose lives are

known to relatively few, save those who have made a special study of their periods. There follows that curious and complex personality, Bubb-Dodington—the classic type of the time-server, the rather disreputable hanger-on to politics, the butt of the satirists as he was of the Prince he pandered to and the monarch he deserted, but who, if only on Browning's showing, must be regarded as a person of importance in his day.

Then there is the Earl of Sandwich, a man who occupied many important positions in the Government, who was an Ambassador, a First Lord of the Admiralty, a Secretary of State, besides filling numberless other subsidiary posts, and who has come down to us simply as the lover of Miss Ray (whom Hackman shot) and as the ' Jemmy Twitcher ' of real life. And from the ruck (so to term them) of the Monks of St. Francis—such men as Sir John Dashwood King, Sir Thomas Stapleton, Ben Bates and Henry Lovibond Collins, of whose names, had they not been linked on to this notorious society, nobody would ever have heard—stand out Paul Whitehead and Robert Lloyd, minor poets both, who owe their perpetuation to being connected with greater men.

And finally there is Sir Francis Dashwood himself, the Lord le Despencer of later days, whose association with the Hell Fire Club and with the Society of Dilettanti (a curious collocation) has preserved his name which his political excursions

would have been powerless to do, and has resulted in handing him down to posterity as a man whom a real love of art was insufficient to save from the degradation of unbounded sensual enjoyment.

There is no gainsaying the fact that all these men were rakes. Their membership of the Medmenham fraternity would alone have been sufficient to prove as much, did we not know that in other directions they fully sustained the part. But there are degrees in all things, and so here we find some whose whole lives were eloquent of such engrained principles, others who may be said to have made intermittent excursions into the realms of vice without being essentially vicious. One was a great patriot, one was a great poet, one was a great wit. The list includes an inveterate time-server and an inveterate gambler ; but none of them can be regarded as a fool (although, to be sure, each of them was guilty of many a foolish action) ; rather is each to be visualised as above the ordinary run of men so far as intellectual endowments are concerned : and if one was a clergyman, and therefore ought to have known better, at least he was a clergyman rather by compulsion than choice ; and if he has left a sullied name, he has at least bequeathed a remarkable body of verse, standing almost alone in its particular *genre* in the splendid achievement of British poetry.

There is no doubt that, little as is generally known about him, Sir Francis Dashwood was in

certain aspects a remarkable man. He was essentially a pioneer: one of those men who are filled with ideas, and with sufficient energy to carry them out. His institution of the Hell Fire Club proves this, in one direction; his founding of the Society of Dilettanti shows it in a more laudable way. During his lifetime he did other notable things, many of which were of that hectic character which has shed undue light on certain less pleasing aspects of his career. He was undoubtedly profane and profligate in an age rather notable for both profligacy and profanity. He absorbed the teachings of Bolingbroke and Voltaire with avidity, and in his dislike of a certain aspect of religious fervour and pietistic zeal he rushed into the opposite extreme and became notable as a pronounced enemy of both. The consequence has been that he has come to be regarded, by those who have studied his character at all,[1] as a man wholly given up to the selfish pandering to his own pleasures, and to the parodying of the forms and essential attributes of a religion in which he did not believe.

Dashwood's escapades on the Continent, and his still more notorious vagaries at Medmenham, cannot be justified on any grounds. But when a man's shortcomings and wickednesses are remembered and condemned, it is but fair to recall those aspects of his career which, if not capable of con-

[1] He only succeeded in getting into the *Supplement* of the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

doning his iniquities, may at least be set against them as something in the nature of palliatives. Thus, when we remember that Dashwood inaugurated the Order of St. Francis, it is only just to remind ourselves that he also founded the Society of Dilettanti ; when we read that he was expelled from Italy on account of his scandalous behaviour, we should also not forget that he had the courage to stand up in the House of Commons in defence of Admiral Byng, against whose shameful judicial murder he spoke and voted ; when we recollect how he had the audacity to make love to the Empress Anne of Russia by means of masquerading as someone else, we should also not forget that when the great Chatham fell fainting in the House of Lords he was one of the very few who rushed to the assistance of the moribund statesman.

The fact is Dashwood, like so many of the rakes with whom I am dealing in these volumes, was a mass of contradictions. He could pass from unholy orgies at Medmenham to serious discussions on art and archaeology ; he could divide his money and his time between the impious parodying of religious rites and those schemes which helped to do so much for the art culture in this country ; he could leave the attractions of women and wine to stand up for a man who was being hounded to death for an idea, and could go to the assistance of another whom ill-health and systematic opposition had at last made powerless. Sir Francis Dashwood

was a rake, but he was not all bad; and if his opinions were so often wrong, at least he had the courage of them; if many of his actions were reprehensible, there were in his career others of which a far better man might well have been proud.

It is time to say something of the details of his life, whether that life was passed in the unholy atmosphere of Medmenham or in the artistic surroundings of the Dilettantes.

The Dashwoods are an old Dorsetshire family, into whose genealogy we need not go further than to note that a certain member of the clan came to London in the seventeenth century, and there traded so successfully as a Turkey merchant that he made a fortune, and besides showed his interest in civic affairs by becoming in due course an Alderman. One of his sons, Samuel, went further, reaching the Mayoralty in 1702; while a third, Francis, attained a baronetcy just five years later. The latter was the father of the Sir Francis Dashwood with whom we are here concerned, and who was born in 1708. The first Sir Francis,[1] besides placing the bloody hand in his 'skitching,' as Yellowplush terms it, had further consolidated his social position by marrying Lady Mary Fane, the daughter of Vere Fane, 4th Earl of Westmorland

[1] He was married no fewer than four times; and by his third wife, Mary, daughter of a Major King, was the father of Sir John Dashwood-King, born in 1716 and dying in 1793, who succeeded his half-brother, *our* Sir Francis Dashwood, as third baronet, and who was also a member of the Hell Fire Club.

of this creation, and it was through Lady Mary that her son eventually obtained the barony of Le Despencer. This title fell into abeyance on the death of the 7th Earl of Westmorland in 1762, and in the following year this abeyance was terminated in Sir Francis Dashwood's favour as son of the eldest daughter of the 4th Earl.[1] Horace Walpole, not unnaturally inimical to Sir Francis for reasons which will become apparent, referring to this, remarks (in a letter to Mann dated April 10th, 1763): " Sir Francis Dashwood in recompense for the woful incapacity he has shown, goes to the Lords."

There is little to record concerning young Dashwood's early days. We do not know indeed what schools he went to, if any ; or indeed any of those circumstances which are so often helpful in correctly judging a man's character by a study of the most impressionable years of his life, when the seeds of that character may be said to be sown ; and young Francis first swims into our ken in his travels ' in early manhood ' on the Continent, he having succeeded his father in the title on November 4th, 1724. Even then actual details are painfully to seek ; and it is but a general view we get of him passing from one foreign centre to another, not without adventure and, it may safely be said, to the scandal of most. He is described as roaming

[1] On the death of the 7th Earl, the Earldom of Westmorland and the Barony of Burghersh alone passed to his cousin Thomas Fane, who died in 1771.

from capital to capital in search of notoriety. What this obviously indicates is that he went about seeking adventures, and indifferent to the notoriety his vagaries brought upon his name.

In these days the ' grand tour ' generally meant the Home Countries, as they may be called: Belgium and Holland, France and Germany, and Italy, with here and there a more daring incursion into Greece and even Turkey. Russia was not usually included in the itinerary of wealthy and noble youths sent abroad to finish an education which they had too often not begun at home ; but young Dashwood was original if he was anything, and to Russia he went, and it was the Russians

" . . . those rough
Cold northern natures . . . "

that he was destined to shock by one of the pranks which anticipated the home-made vagaries of later years. For some recondite reason he fell, or affected to fall, in love with the Empress Anne, and prosecuted his ridiculous suit in perhaps the most inappropriate disguise he could well have selected : in a word, he masqueraded as Charles XII. of Sweden of all people, and presented himself in this character as the lover of the ruler of all the Russias ! How he escaped the outraged dignity of the lady, or the vengeance of her favourite Biren, is not recorded. Probably the whole thing was regarded as one of those escapades of a mad

Englishman which were not to be taken seriously.[1] Anyhow, after this absurd adventure, Dashwood seems to have passed on to Italy and there he certainly acted in such a way, outraging both the religion and the morals of that country, that the authorities requested him to leave the States of the Church and to prosecute his frolics elsewhere.

Without precise details of his doings, all we can say is that his Continental tour was generally of that character in which the absence of details is perhaps the most satisfactory feature. But apparently no young Englishman of an impressionable nature could in those times visit Italy without coming more or less under the influence of one or other of those kings in exile who made it their headquarters, and whence they stretched forth the filaments of their intrigues against the reigning family ; and just as we have seen Wharton coquetting with Prince James Edward, so we find Dashwood doing the same in a modified form with Prince Charles Edward. Horace Mann,[2] who knew most things that were going on in this direction, evi-

[1] Walpole in his *Memoirs of the Last Ten Years of George II.'s Reign* records this amazing incident.

[2] In 1740 Dashwood was in Florence, where he met Horace Walpole and Gray, as well as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who tells Lady Pomfret how he was every day " with an English lady called Mrs. D'Arcie, in Rome." At a later date (1748) she writes to Lady Bute, asking her whom Sir Francis is going to marry : " I knew him at Florence," she adds, " he seemed so nice in the choice of a wife, I have some curiosity to know who it is that has had charms enough to make him enter into an engagement he used to speak of with fear and trembling."



SIR FRANCIS DASHWOOD.

[face p. 30.]

dently discovered something which he considered it advisable to report to the English Government, and we have Horace Walpole writing to him (on May 26th, 1742) and saying: "I am happy you have taken that step about Sir Francis Dashwood; the credit it must have given you with the King will more than counterbalance any little hurt you might apprehend from the cabal." In an earlier letter from Horace, dated April 8th of the same year, the following passage is even more precise: "You have no notion," he writes, "how astonished I was at reading your account of Sir Francis Dashwood!—that it should be possible for private and personal pique so to sour any man's temper and honour, and so utterly to change their principles! I own I am for your naming him in your next despatch: they may at least interrupt his letters and prevent his dirty intelligence."

This association (for what it was worth) with Prince Charles Edward's fortunes was, however, but a passing phase, although Dashwood made a regular avowal of it in 1751, when he was associated with Andrew Hone and others of Frederick Prince of Wales's household who were suspected of the same leanings. It was evidently actuated far more by his dislike of Sir Robert Walpole than by any special sympathy with the Stuart cause. He always spoke with contempt of the minister, and on one occasion was called to order in the House for asserting that foreigners generally had a low

opinion of him which they were in the habit of expressing openly.

As we see, Dashwood had become a member of the House of Commons, being returned for the borough of New Romney on May 5th, 1741; for although he had come back to England at an earlier date, he must have returned to Italy in 1742, as seems proved by the Walpole-Mann correspondence; and it was apparently during this second visit that his intrigues on behalf of Prince Charles Edward took place. That he was in this country during the previous year is also proved by an earlier letter of Walpole's to Horace Mann (1741), in which he says: "Sir Francis Dashwood desires you will send him four of the Volterra urns of the chimney-piece size;" and he adds parenthetically, "he is one of the most inveterate (of the opposition); being malicious they pass for ingenious, as in these countries fogs are reckoned warm weather."

Walpole, who appears to have been friendly with Dashwood at one time, notably in Florence in 1740, had evidently come to realise the scatter-brained character of the man, as a remark he makes in another letter proves; for after telling Mann that Lord Delawar's regiment is going to be given to Lord Westmorland (Dashwood's uncle), he adds: "So now Sir Francis Dashwood will grow as fond of the King as he used to be—or as he has hated him since;" since, that is, Lord Westmorland had

lost his regiment, on which account Dashwood had joined the opposition !

The political vagaries of Dashwood are rather outside my province, as have been, and will be, those of the other rakes whose careers are sketched in this series of volumes. Where such aspects have really had a serious bearing on the history of the country, they are pretty generally known, and would in any case form too complicated a subject to be treated in these short biographical sketches ; where, as generally happens, the political side of the rake's character is subsidiary, his doings and sayings are of too insignificant a character to require resuscitation from the decent obscurity of the Parliamentary journals and the arid pages of Hansard. Thus it is that Dashwood's political career, either in the Commons or the Lords, is not of a nature to detain us, except as regards a general view of his conduct and two special exemplifications of it.[1]

He cannot be termed a time-server, as was Bubb-Dodington, any more than he can be described as a patriot, as was Wilkes. Politics obviously had no special attraction for him, and he no doubt joined the House of Commons as he might have joined a club (White's, for instance, of which he became a member in 1743), because it was the thing

[1] I may note that he was re-elected for New Romney in 1747 and that he obtained a new seat, that of Weymouth and Melcombe-Regis in 1761, to which he was re-elected the following year on being made Chancellor of the Exchequer.

to do. Once there, he seems to have passed in a pique from the support of the Government to that of the opposition with easy indifference. We find him favouring the policy of Bubb-Dodington and opposing the hiring of Russian and Hessian troops in 1755 with the same lack of political principle as he exhibited when he intrigued on behalf of the young Chevalier, and then took office as Chancellor of the Exchequer (1762-3), Joint Paymaster-General (1770-81)[1], and Keeper of the Wardrobe (1763-5), the last a sinecure given him on the fall of the Bute Ministry in 1763. Indeed, his political career is chiefly notable for three more or less dramatic episodes, varying in character and importance, but nevertheless memorable as exemplifying the fact that the protagonist of the Hell Fire Club and the confirmed rake of an hundred foreign and domestic unseemly incidents possessed at least a warm heart and had the courage to champion the despised and oppressed.

Dashwood's support of Admiral Byng, when that unhappy officer was being hounded to an ignominious death, is, I think, the brightest and most notable spot in his career, which was not otherwise especially notable or laudable. Most people know

[1] Walpole, writing to Mann on December 8th, 1766, speaks of Dashwood having been appointed to this post, so he must have held it longer than the dates given above. *The Complete Peerage* says that he held this post from "1766 till his death" (vol. iv. (1916), p. 285). He was, besides, Treasurer of the Chamber in 1761.

the essential facts concerning that hideous miscarriage of justice—a miscarriage that caused Voltaire to write that in England they occasionally executed an Admiral *pour encourager les autres*; but I may remind those that have forgotten the facts that Byng was unsuccessful in an attempt to relieve Minorca when that island was threatened by a French fleet under the Duc de Richelieu in 1756; that at the instance of the Government, whose ineffectual war policy had rendered it unpopular, he was made a scapegoat, tried by court-martial, and found guilty of neglect of duty; and that he was shot in spite of the unanimous recommendation to mercy by the Court, which deplored the fact that the article of war under which he was condemned admitted of no mitigation of the extreme penalty, even in a case (as this case was) where the crime was committed through an error of judgment. Pitt pleaded the Admiral's cause with the King; Dashwood was one of those who stood up in the House of Commons and spoke on behalf of mercy. Both efforts were unavailing, and Byng suffered death on March 14th, 1757, on board the *Monarque*, meeting his fate, we are assured, with great courage.[1]

On a later occasion—that of the trial of Lord

[1] There is an interesting account, not very well known, of the circumstance, together with various letters concerning the matter, including one from the Duc de Richelieu (testifying to his enemy's courage—a letter Voltaire sent to Byng himself), in the *Letters of a Lady of the Eighteenth Century* (the Hon. Mrs. Osborn).

Byron (16th and 17th April, 1765) for killing Mr. Chaworth at the Star and Garter tavern in Pall Mall, Dashwood (or Lord le Despencer as he had then become) was one of the four peers who found Byron not guilty, the rest returning a verdict of manslaughter; while, as I have already mentioned, he was practically the only peer who went to the assistance, with words of encouragement, of Lord Chatham when the latter, in attempting to reply to the Duke of Richmond, fell fainting in the House of Lords on April 7th, 1778.[1]

There is another aspect of Dashwood's character which properly deserves to be rescued from oblivion: I mean his interest in art and archaeology. In those days a knowledge of architecture and 'hands,' as the paintings of the great masters were then termed, was an essential part of a polite education. Then, great peers like the Earl of Burlington and the Earl of Pembroke did not disdain a practical knowledge of design, and the splendid Burlington House in Piccadilly long remained an example of the taste and knowledge of the former, while many of the improvements at Wilton, as well as Marble Hill, Twickenham, are proofs of the ability of the latter. Men of fashion at that time really knew something of what they criticised. The grand tours had opened up the minds of innumerable young men of wealth and position, who in Italy and Greece and elsewhere

[1] Walpole to Mann, July 7th, 1778.

had absorbed the aroma of art in its real homes, and with the thoroughness which is only to be gained by personal investigation. There was, too, at this period a great revival of interest in such things, greater indeed than there had been since the days of Charles I. and Buckingham and Arundel. One of the chief incentives in this direction was the institution of the Society of Dilettanti, and one of the foremost in inaugurating that body, if not its actual founder, was Sir Francis Dashwood.

The history of the society has been written, and therefore there is no necessity for me to recapitulate the splendid work it did in those days, or the names of its many illustrious members. It would appear to have been inaugurated in 1732, but it was four years later that it really began to be an artistic power in the land, and it is from then that the list of members is dated. Among the first of these was Dashwood (his friends Lord Sandwich and Bubb-Dodington were later members), and that he took a leading part in the operations of the society is proved by Horace Walpole's (who by the way was never a member) sneer when he writes to Mann and tells him of the formation of " a club of which the nominal qualification is having been in Italy, and the real one being drunk : the two chiefs are Lord Middlesex [1] and Sir Francis Dashwood, who were

[1] Charles Sackville, eldest son of the Duke of Dorset. He was born in 1711, succeeded as second Duke of Dorset in 1765, and died in 1769. It was his nephew, the third Duke, who was the cricket enthusiast, and one of the early members of the M.C.C.

seldom sober the whole time they were in Italy." There is little doubt that Dashwood was not notable for sobriety in any way during his Continental period, but there is also as little doubt that Walpole's remark as to the purposes of the club is ridiculously unfair and untrue. Dashwood, in common with most of the members, had a real love of art and an interest in and knowledge of its annals and achievements, and he may well be left in possession of this merit as against his many shortcomings in other respects.

There is no doubt that, if not actually the projector of the society, Dashwood was for many years its leading and most active member. Its annals show what an important share he took in its schemes and deliberations. When it was proposed to erect a building on the lines of the Temple of Pola in Connaught Square, it was in his name that the ground was purchased from the Duke of Chandos. He headed the subscriptions; and although the scheme did not materialise, he was on all the committees and worked hard for its achievement. When in 1772 a committee was formed for an intended new headquarters, Lord le Despencer (he had so become in 1762) was an active member. Schemes for expeditions to Asia Minor and elsewhere had his support. When Stuart and Revett's great work on the antiquities of Greece appeared, he took a number of copies, and was selected to present an example of the work

to the King and Queen. In 1746 he had been elected Arch-Master of the society, and when it was proposed that that officer should wear a special dress, it was to Dashwood (as he then was) and Knapton the painter to the Society, that the selection of a suitable one was left. In fact, his name constantly appears in the minutes, indicating an almost feverish interest in the welfare of the club.

The incidental mention of Knapton reminds me that he painted in 1742 (as one of that splendid series of works perpetuating the members) Dashwood appropriately garbed as one of the Medmenham Abbey friars, in an attitude of devotion before the figure of the Venus de Medici, and holding a goblet on which are inscribed the words *Matri Sanctorum*, the picture itself being inscribed *San Francisco de Wycombo*.[1] The association of Venus with Dashwood has, of course, apart from the profanity and indecorousness of the implication, a double and quite suitable significance with the character of the man who may be said to have worshipped that deity both in her material and artistic form with a special devotion.

And this brings us again to Medmenham Abbey. I have already spoken of the inauguration of the fraternity which, under Dashwood's *ægis*, met and

[1] Hogarth, who was at least once a guest at Medmenham, also painted a portrait of Dashwood, which has been engraved.

carried on their unholy orgies in that rural spot. What went on during those flagrant two weeks in the year in which the members foregathered can but be guessed at. I have endeavoured in the former chapter to adumbrate as well as may be the impious rites in which this body of men, most of whom have left outstanding names in other directions, took part. The trouble is that, while with the most of them this association has come to be regarded as an incident in their career, with Dashwood it has become the one outstanding episode of his life. Wilkes's public acts, Churchill's poetic gifts, Selwyn's wit, and Bubb-Dodington's tergiversations, have all been sufficient to draw attention from their connection with the Order of St. Francis. But St. Francis himself stands out prominently and almost to the exclusion of all else as the head and front of the club (as indeed he was) and as nothing else (which is doing him less than justice). The atmosphere of Medmenham has indeed obscured so much in his career that we are apt to forget that the Royal Society elected him one of its Fellows in 1746, and that three years later Oxford made him a D.C.L., and that he was for a time Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire; nor should it be forgotten that when at the outbreak of the Seven Years' War a wave of military ardour passed over the country, Dashwood became the first Colonel of the Bucks Militia (1757), and that his Lieutenant-Colonel

was John Wilkes,[1] who later succeeded him in the higher post.

Dashwood was a man of great ability, although to be sure his political excursions hardly exhibited it. But then many men have laboured under disadvantages (John Stuart Mill was an example) when transplanted into an alien and unsuitable environment, and when Lord Bute foolishly made him Chancellor of the Exchequer it was his ill-starred Excise Bill on cider which was largely instrumental in bringing about the fall of that already unpopular minister. Dashwood was unfortunate in his political life. He became a member of the household of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and that was enough to stultify greater gifts than even he possessed; he became automatically an opponent of that great statesman Sir Robert Walpole, and one of his cronies was Bubb-Dodington—what could such a combination do but lead to disaster? The fact is he was like so many rakes, bitten by the demon of restlessness; and, *mutatis mutandis*, he presents a picture not dissimilar from those we have already studied in the Duke of Buckingham and the Duke of Wharton. Indeed, so many of the same characteristics are present in all three that they form (not to say it profanely) a sort of apostolic succession of rakishness, which

[1] It is an unpleasing trait in Dashwood's character that he should have identified himself with Lord Sandwich in attacking Wilkes's *Essay on Woman* in the House of Lords. Two kettles were indeed calling the pot black!

makes them alone interesting as a study in non-hereditary psychology.

Walpole, admittedly an unfriendly critic, says of Dashwood that " he was a man of sense without eloquence, and of humour without good humour." That, however, he could be pleasant and amusing in company the very reverse of that to which he is generally credited as resorting, is proved by the rather unexpected testimony of so proper a lady as Mrs. Pendarves, who, writing to Mrs. Dewes and describing a ball at Norfolk House given by Frederick Prince of Wales in 1741, says, *inter alia*, that, " Sir Francis Dashwood stuck by us all night, and is a very entertaining man ; " [1] while Mrs. Montagu (that famous blue-stocking) tells the Duchess of Portland four years later that " he is really very good company." In the letter in which this remark occurs, Mrs. Montagu says : " I suppose you know Sir Francis Dashwood is upon the brink of matrimony. I see him sometimes with his intended bride, Lady Ellis." This lady was Sarah, daughter and co-heiress of George [2] Gould, Esq., of Iver, Bucks, and widow of Sir Richard Ellis, whom Walpole describes as " a poor forlorn Presbyterian prude." Whether she was this or no (and I am always rather inclined to doubt Walpole, especially when he becomes alliterative) we have

[1] Autobiography of Mrs. Delany.

[2] So the *D.N.B.* and *The Complete Peerage* (1916), but the Baronetage gives his name as Thomas.

no evidence to show that she and Sir Francis did not live happily. The reformed rake (and Dashwood built a church as a proof of his reformation !) [1] is proverbially not the worst sort of husband. With the lady, whom he married on December 19th, 1745, he became possessed of Place House at Ealing, which Lysons says he owned " after Sir Richard Ellis and before Sir Richard Littleton." [2] He possessed, too, besides his seat West Wycombe Park, a London residence, 18 Hanover Square, now the Oriental Club, which appears also to have come to him with his wife, as it is described as her freehold ; and she died in January, 1769, nearly thirteen years before he did.

The last reference we have to Lord le Despencer (the Sir Francis Dashwood of earlier days) in Walpole's letters is a notice to the effect that " he is past recovery." This was written on November 11th, 1781, and just a month later he died (he was buried in the mausoleum he had erected at West Wycombe), if not full of honours, at least leaving a name suggestive of a certain type of man who did many things ill, but who at the same time had his appointed place as at least one who furthered the interest in and knowledge of art in England, and

[1] See Wilkes's description of it in *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit.*

[2] His father had built (in 1690) a house at Wanstead ; but this passed to his son-in-law, Sir Orlando Bridgman, who eventually sold it to a Mr. Gough. Lysons (*Environs*, vol. 4, p. 236).

who in his most daring excursions into profligacy carried with him something of the artistry of an earlier age.[1]

[1] Among the *Egerton MSS.* (2136) will be found some of Dashwood's letters; those to Wilkes are in the *Additional MSS.* (30867).

CHAPTER III

JOHN WILKES

OF all the members of the Hell Fire Club, John Wilkes is at once the most famous and in every respect the most memorable. With but very few exceptions, he bulks more largely during the latter half of the eighteenth century than any figure that can be recalled; and you will hardly read a page in the annals of that full and bustling period without being confronted by the familiar name, conjuring up the historic squint which is as well-known as the protruding eyes of the King and the up-tilted nose of the pilot who weathered the storm of faction and foreign levy. So dominant indeed is the personality of the 'Friend to Liberty,' as his self-indited epitaph describes him,[1] that the records of the period in which he lived would without him be a kind of political and social Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. For he has left his mark on the politics, the civic life, the social annals, even the literature of that period, and he

[1] In the vault of Grosvenor Chapel where he was buried.

stands before us in a dozen guises as patriot, popular hero, member of Parliament, civic dignitary, as writer, man of fashion, and as rake, in a bewildering kaleidoscope of the varied incarnations in which humanity could once disport itself. He was both the earnest patriot and the gay dog of a period when the two were not inconsistent, a conjunction that makes it difficult properly to estimate the qualities of so many who exhibited something of this dual character.

It is but a vignette that is here attempted of the man whose full-length portrait has been often portrayed both by friendly and unfriendly critics. The political vicissitudes of a career very rich in them can only be slightly sketched in, and it is rather the private character of the man and his social aspect which here concern us: that aspect which led him to Medmenham Abbey and was responsible for the publication of the notorious essay which has stuck like a burr on his reputation. The sceptical will always question the patriotism of the politician, and in an age when such an attitude was assumed by many from interested motives it is particularly difficult to differentiate between the real and fictitious patriot. A man's private life too, if it be subject to adverse criticism, will generally militate against his public protestations of honesty and integrity. But Wilkes is only one of a large band of patriots (for I believe him really to have been one) who in other respects

have been rakes and ill-livers, and I see no reason to confound the member of the Hell Fire Club and the writer of the *Essay on Woman* with the man who stood up against the tyranny of a minister and even had the courage to censure the Crown itself.

From his youth upwards Wilkes must have been an exceedingly attractive person. The mother of his future wife found him so, and his parents were devoted to him. We are told that he possessed " the easy and elegant manners of a gentleman, the refinements of the most amiable and fashionable politeness, with a happy flow of spirits and a perfect command of language—the last acquired entirely by his own industry, observation and taste." Even Johnson, who once said he would as soon dine with Jack Ketch as with Jack Wilkes, not only dined with him (on that historic occasion at Dilly's) [1] but confessed that he had been pleased in his company and had passed an agreeable day. Indeed nothing, I think, proves Wilkes's power of ingratiating himself into the favour of those most averse from his opinions and antagonistic to his character than the way in which he gradually

[1] On the occasion of this meeting, Boswell records how " Mr. Wilkes held a candle to show a fine print of a beautiful female which hung in the room, and pointed out the elegant contour of the bosom with the finger of an arch connoisseur. He afterwards in conversation with me waggishly insisted," adds Boswell, " that all the time Johnson showed visible signs of a fervent admiration of the corresponding charms of the fair Quaker "—a Mrs. Knowles, who was of the party.

wheedled himself into the Doctor's good graces, until the latter could say of him, " Jack has a great variety of talk, Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman. . . . I would do Jack a kindness rather than not," and only a year had passed since Johnson had linked his name with that of the common hangman !

Without attempting a complete sketch of Wilkes's very full and tumultuous career, it is necessary, in order to realise his character, to set down at least the salient incidents in a life which had so important a bearing on the political and social annals of his day.

He was the second son of Israel Wilkes and his wife Sarah, *née* Heaton, and was born in St. John's Square, Clerkenwell, on October 17th, 1727. His father, an eminent distiller and a man of wealth and position, came of an ancient family, and young John was brought up in surroundings of luxury and refinement. He was first sent to school at Hertford, and " being a youth of very sprightly talents and great promise," his father intended him for the law. Having learnt the rudiments at Hertford, he was withdrawn from the school and placed under the private tuition of a dissenting clergyman named Leeson, at Aylesbury. It would appear that there was an ulterior reason for the selection of this place as an educational centre for young John ; for a great friend of the family, Mrs. Mead, was living with her only daughter at

Aylesbury House, and both she and John's parents projected a marriage between him and Miss Mead.

In order to complete his studies, his father determined to send him, under Mr. Leeson's care, to the University of Leyden, and thither the two duly went. To the usual classical curriculum was thus added a knowledge of men and things not possible in a public school and only partially obtainable in an English university, and Wilkes made good use of his time, his own application and observation being, in the words of one of his biographers, " his best preceptors." Having completed the course at Leyden, he made a tour in Holland and the Netherlands and part of Germany, but owing to the war was prevented from entering French territory, and in due course returned to England early in 1749, in the April of which year we find him elected an F.R.S., a distinction of easier attainment in those days than in these.

In the following October he fulfilled the wishes of his family and those of the young lady's mother by marrying Miss Mead, who was, parenthetically, an heiress, besides being from all accounts a lady of irreproachable character, aged 32. In the following year (August 5th) a daughter was born in Red Lion Court, the London home of Mrs. Mead—the Mary to whom Wilkes was always so much more attached than he proved to be to her mother. For, as a matter of fact, the family-made union was not a success, and soon after this event

Mr. and Mrs. John Wilkes separated, owing to "a total dissimilarity of sentiment." There is little doubt that Wilkes was one of those men who shine rather in public and social than in domestic life, and the mutual agreement of him and his wife to live apart so soon after their marriage was probably the best thing that could have happened to the lady, short of their continuing in a happy married state.

After the birth of the daughter Wilkes took a house in Chapel Court, Great George Street, Westminster, and what happened here was the initial cause of the matrimonial trouble. According to Almon, "his new house required an expensive establishment, and introduced a style and manner of living very different from what Mrs. Wilkes had been accustomed to. A variety of company and splendid dinners almost every day were indeed such scenes of dissipation as must be distressing to a mind that had from early life been habituated to economy. But what was infinitely worse and beyond the power of forbearance, was his introducing into his house a number of juvenile, gay bacchanalians, of dissolute manners and vulgar language." The rake in Wilkes was beginning to exhibit itself! Among the guests at these *symposia* were Lord Sandwich and Sir Francis Dashwood, and other members of the set who, as we have seen, carried on their more unrestrained orgies at Medmenham Abbey. But the worst of all the

habitués of Chapel Court was Thomas Potter, Member of Parliament for Aylesbury, and son of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Almon, indeed, goes so far as to say that it was this rake who was the ruin of Wilkes, "who was not a bad man early or naturally." Potter it was who poisoned Wilkes's morals, for although the former had much vivacity and wit, his life and conversation were both coarse and obscene, and anything but pleasing to a lady of Mrs. Wilkes's temperament.

But to make an end of Wilkes's matrimonial experiment, there was yet another cause for the separation. Mrs. Wilkes was a good ten years older than her husband, and all her ideas and her manner of life were hall-marked by this disparity. Many years after (in 1778) Wilkes himself, writing to Mrs. Stafford, thus refers to the matter:

"Now one word on my own situation. In my non-age, to please an indulgent father, I married a woman half as old again as myself; of a large fortune,—my own being also that of a gentleman. It was a sacrifice to Plutus, not to Venus. . . . I stumbled at the very threshold of the Temple of Hymen:

> The God of Love was not a bidden guest,
> Nor present at his own mysterious feast.

Are such ties, at such a time of life, binding?—and are school-boys to be dragged to the altar?"

One can well imagine that having thus escaped from the thraldom of an uncongenial tie, Wilkes,

surrounded by the gay and loose companions with whom he had become associated, with plenty of money and a tendency to rakishness, gave himself up to a career of profligacy. Had he done this and nothing else, his name would have survived perhaps in the indiscreet memoirs of contemporaries or been branded with the infamy of pornographic perpetuation. But there was another side to his character, and if he could associate himself with the Hell Fire Club or forgather with the Potters of the period, he had better ambitions, and like many brilliant and educated men of that period (and not only of that period), he comes down to us as a Janus-faced personage, now consorting with rakes and blackguards, now merging his personality in public affairs, and by many and devious ways arriving at fame and a popularity almost unparalleled in the annals of the country.

In the February of 1754 Wilkes was elected High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, and in the following April, on the occasion of a general election, he made his first effort to enter the House of Commons as member for Berwick. It was a costly but unsuccessful experiment, for in spite of his protestations to the electors that as he would never take a bribe so he would never offer one, he is said to have expended between three and four thousand pounds for the hundred and ninety-two votes, which were all he secured. He had entered into the contest against the wishes and

advice of his wife and his own family, and on his return from the north he was exposed to reproaches which finally led to the separation I have already recorded.

He now for a time divided his residence between Bath, where he stayed with his sister, Mrs. Jeffereys, at 3 North Parade, and London, where his intimates were Sandwich and Dashwood, Sir William Stanhope, Sir Thomas Stapleton (a cousin of Dashwood's), Paul Whitehead and others of the Hell Fire Club, and where he haunted the Society of Dilettanti in Palace Yard, the Beefsteak Club in Covent Garden, and other less reputable centres, with occasional jaunts to Medmenham.

Wilkes's career at this period was irregular and licentious to a degree. His passion for a gay life grew on what it fed on, but it did not prevent him from prosecuting his Parliamentary ambitions. At the end of June 1757 his friend Thomas Potter, Member for Aylesbury, was appointed one of the Vice-Treasurers of Ireland and had to seek re-election, and it was arranged that if he could secure a seat in another borough Wilkes should be elected for Aylesbury. Almon says there was a good deal of manœuvre and trick practised to bring this about, but it is here sufficient to state that Potter became member for Oakhampton and that Wilkes was returned for Aylesbury, where he had a house and other property. The manœuvres mentioned resulted in Wilkes having to pay over

seven thousand pounds for the privilege of a seat in Parliament, and that, as it turned out, for only three years; whereas, as Almon remarks, "he might at that time have purchased a borough for the whole septennial period for less money." This expenditure was so great a drag on Wilkes's resources that he found himself suddenly and for the first time hard up for money. In order to extricate him Potter introduced him to the Jews, and this incident resulted in an act that was I think the worst incident in his career. When he separated from his wife it was agreed that he should allow her an annuity of £200 out of the large fortune he had with her; this he now tried to get possession of, first by private then by legal means. He was unsuccessful in both cases, but the episode is one that even his apologists have been unable to excuse.

In the year (1757) in which he was elected for Aylesbury, Wilkes became Lieutenant-Colonel of the Buckinghamshire Militia, then raised, as has been recorded in the last chapter, by Sir Francis Dashwood, who was its first Colonel. I may here state that when in 1762 Dashwood was made Chancellor of the Exchequer he resigned his command, and in a letter to the other officers of the regiment notifying the fact, he suggested that Wilkes, "a man of spirit, good sense and civil deportment," as he terms him, should succeed him, and he was accordingly promoted to that post.

We have seen how Wilkes overcame Johnson's antipathy to him.[1] That famous meeting did not occur till 1776. Now, some twenty years earlier, two incidents happened, one likely to have told against Wilkes in Johnson's eyes, the other fully capable of obliterating the annoyance. When the great dictionary appeared, Johnson, in the grammar of the English tongue prefixed to that work, wrote, "*H* seldom, perhaps never, begins any but the first syllable." Wilkes published some remarks on this, in the course of which he wrote: "The author of this observation must be a man of quick appre*h*ension and of a most compre*h*ensive genius." There was no gainsaying the correctness of this witty rejoinder, and poor Johnson was for once silenced. Four years later, however, the Doctor's black servant, Francis Barber, was pressed on board one of the King's ships, and Smollett wrote to Wilkes to solicit his interest with his friends Mr. Hay and Mr. Elliot, then Lords of the Admiralty, to get the man off. This Wilkes succeeded in doing, and some letters to him on the subject from Smollett are given by Almon, in one of which the author of *Humphrey Clinker* calls Johnson (and I think it was the first time the

[1] Johnson had once remarked, it will be remembered, that it was "wonderful to think that all the force of government was required to prevent Wilkes from being chosen the Chief Magistrate of London, though the liverymen knew he would rob their shops,—knew he would debauch their daughters"—an observation which Wilkes received from Boswell "with a good humour," the biographer said, he could not admire enough.

phrase, which has done such good service since, was used) the Cham (Almon prints it Chum) of Literature, and anticipates so many of our journalists by further describing him as the ' lexicographer.'

At the general election of 1761 Wilkes was re-elected without opposition for Aylesbury, and during this year began writing for the Press, contributing certain articles of a political character to *The St. James's Chronicle.* The fact is, the heavy expenses to which he had been put to secure the seat originally, coupled with the fact that living in his constituency he was, as he once said, continually obliged to entertain his supporters, had made sad inroads on his otherwise considerable fortune, and writing presented itself as a ready means of earning money. But it could after all not have gone far, and it was at this moment that he applied for the post of ambassador to Constantinople,[1] just than vacated by Sir James Porter. Pitt and Lord Temple had, however, another nominee in Henry Grenville ; and Lord Bute, not venturing to oppose their recommendation, was obliged to refuse Wilkes. Nothing daunted, although he considered he owed Bute a grudge, Wilkes applied for the Governorship of Canada, a post which would have been created

[1] It is a curious coincidence that Mirabeau, a man who had much in common with Wilkes both in his private and public character, once desired the French Government to send him as its representative to Constantinople. This fact was told Madame Campan by Marie Antoinette. See Campan's *Memoires.*

had the treaty with France, in which it was agreed that England should retain that state, materialised. Unfortunately for Wilkes it did not, for he had received such assurances of support from both Pitt and Temple that his success seemed almost certain. He says himself that, " his ambition was to have gone to Quebec the first Governor: to have reconciled the new subjects to the English; and to have shown the French the advantages of the mild rule of laws over that of lawless power and despotism."[1] It is one of the might-have-beens of history, and an interesting speculation could be entered upon as to the difference to the domestic history of the country Wilkes's success in obtaining the post he coveted would have made. There was, too, just a chance that after all he might have been sent to Turkey, for Grenville was soon recalled from the Porte, and Wilkes made a second application for the position—a position offered, however, first to Robert Colebrooke, who did not take it, and then to John Murray, at that time resident in Venice, who did.

The year 1762 is notable in the annals of Wilkes, for on the 2nd of June he began the publication of *The North Briton*, and on October 5th he fought his duel with Lord Talbot. Before this, however, he had made no little stir with his *Observations on the Rupture with Spain*, in which he vindicated the actions of Pitt and Temple and found an oppor-

[1] *The Political Register.*

tunity of paying off his score with Lord Bute, who in the sequel must have regretted that he had not braved his then colleagues and let the firebrand go to the cooling influence of Canada or the even more congenial climate of Turkey. Especially must he have wished this when later, in 1763, Wilkes came out with an ironical dedication to him prefixed to Ben Jonson's play *The Fall of Mortimer*. This masterly piece of satire is given at length by Almon, where the curious may read it and gather from it that power of veiled invective which its author was to exhibit in a still greater degree in *The North Briton*.

The publication of this news-sheet marked an important and far-reaching event in Wilkes's career. The origin of this famous paper came about in this way. On Lord Bute's taking office he engaged certain literary men with the design of supporting his schemes and vituperating those of his predecessors in office. With this object a periodical was started called *The Briton*, with Smollett as editor and leading spirit. It first appeared on May 29th, 1762, and ran till February 12th, 1763. No sooner had the first number appeared than Wilkes brought out (on June 2nd) *The North Briton*, written in avowed opposition to Bute, his ministry and his official journal. The new venture caught on, as the saying is, at once, and the wit and audacity of Wilkes proved far more than a match both for the learning of Dr.

Smollett (the incident put an end to the friendship of these two eminent men) or for the lighter touch of Arthur Murphy, who edited shortly afterwards another Government print called *The Auditor*. The paper warfare thus begun was carried on with no little acrimony on both sides, Wilkes making it his special business to attack Lord Bute in every possible way. Matters, however, only came to a climax when on April 23rd, 1763, actually about a fortnight after the minister's resignation, the notorious ' Number forty-five ' of *The North Briton* appeared. The ministry at once took action, and on the advice of the law officers of the Crown, Mr. Yorke and Sir Fletcher Norton, who considered the paper " an infamous and seditious libel, tending to inflame the minds and alienate the affections of the people from his majesty," a general warrant was issued, without being supported by any information on oath and in which only the publisher's (George Kearsley) name was mentioned, to seize " the authors, printers and publishers." The whole thing was, besides being illegal, shamefully mismanaged. A printer named Leach was first dragged from his home and shut up for some days after it was known that he had had nothing to do with the matter, and had only been suspected because Wilkes had been observed entering his house. Kearsley was the next victim, and on his stating that he could not say who was the author but that it was one

Balfe who was the printer, Mr. Wilkes who gave the order for printing, and Churchill [1] who received the profits of the sales, the same warrant was issued *a third time* and Balfe was apprehended, followed by a fourth issue of the warrant directed against Wilkes himself, and Wilkes was duly arrested, although he protested that as his name was not in the warrant the proceedings were illegal and *ultra vires*. He sent word to Lord Temple stating the position of affairs, and the latter at once took steps to obtain a writ of *Habeas Corpus*, which was issued forthwith. The ministry possessed means, however, to evade it, and caused Wilkes to be sent a prisoner to the Tower on April 30th, seizing at the same time all his papers and searching his house to the extent of breaking open " every closet, bureau and drawer " in it.

From that moment Wilkes became a popular hero. Efforts were made to get him released on bail, Lord Temple and the Duke of Bolton both offering themselves as security to the enormous amount of one hundred thousand pounds each, but this was refused ; and it was not till May the 3rd that the prisoner was brought to the bar of the Court of Common Pleas. There he made a

[1] While the King's Messengers were searching Wilkes's house, Churchill happened to call. Wilkes, with great presence of mind, greeted him with " Good day, Mr. Thomson, how is Mrs. Thomson to-day ? " Churchill, at once realising the position, stated that " she was expecting him at that moment," and at once taking leave of Wilkes, went off to his lodgings, secured his papers, and retired to the country. Nichol's *Anecdotes*.

speech in his own defence, setting forth the illegality of the general warrant under which he had been arrested and imprisoned. He was again remanded to the Tower and removed from his position of Colonel of Militia by the King's order. On May 6th he was brought once more before the Court, and there the Lord Chief Justice Pratt pronounced that famous judgment which determined the illegality of General Warrants, and resulted in Wilkes's acquittal and discharge. From the court he was conducted to his house in Great George Street by an immense concourse of people, and that evening a large portion of London was illuminated by bonfires and fireworks and made vociferous by general rejoicing. It was recognised that through, if not exactly by, Wilkes, tyranny had received a heavy blow, and that the credit of the ministry was hopelessly shattered.

As a matter of fact this was the starting point for Wilkes's long and successful struggle against authority. From the moment he regained his freedom he never rested in his attacks. His native wit realised that the ministry by one false step had delivered itself into his hands, and he showed it as little mercy as he had himself received.

He began by writing, with the approval of Lord Temple, a peremptory letter to the Secretaries of State, demanding the return of his papers which had been seized by their orders and which he did not hesitate to describe as stolen goods. He then

applied for a warrant to search the houses of these Secretaries (Lords Egremont and Halifax). An acrimonious correspondence followed. Lord Temple, as a friend of Wilkes, was relieved of his office of Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, and Wilkes's quondam friend Dashwood, now Lord le Despencer, was appointed in his place. Actions were brought against the Secretaries, the King's Messengers, and others implicated in the illegal transactions described, and verdicts were obtained against them in all cases.

Hitherto the Government had had no adequate evidence that Wilkes was the author of *The North Briton*. He now took a step which gave the authorities the opportunity of connecting it directly with him. He set up a printing press in his house in Great George Street, where he reprinted the journal as well as other things, including the famous *Essay on Woman*, and this action was destined, as we shall see, to bring about a reversal of the advantages he had gained in his fight with authority.

In the meanwhile, after an attempt by a man named Dunn to assassinate him, a curious account of which little known incident is given by Almon, Wilkes went to Paris in order to see his daughter, who was at school there. But even foreign ground was not safe for him, and as he was one day walking with Lord Palmerston to Notre Dame he was accosted by a Captain Forbes, who challenged

him to a duel in consequence of his writings in *The North Briton* against the Scottish nation. Nothing came of this, however, as Wilkes was temporarily arrested and Forbes disappeared. Nor did the latter think well to keep an appointment Wilkes gave him at Menin, whither the latter went to await him. It has been supposed, with, I think, reason, that the hot-headed Forbes was in reality a myrmidon of the British Ministry, which probably hoped through his means to get rid of a redoubtable opponent.

Wilkes returned to England with the hope of entering the House of Commons and there laying his case before the public, and three days before the opening of Parliament he issued No. 46 of *The North Briton*, containing another violent attack on certain members of the Government, among them Lord Sandwich, formerly one of his friends and boon companions. The House met on November 15th, 1763, and Wilkes rose to make his statement; but before he could do so Grenville stated that he had a message on the subject from the King, and it was resolved that this should be read first. It proved to be a short *résumé* of the '45' *North Briton* incident, and in regard to which it was stated that Wilkes had eluded the just penalties by pleading his privilege as a member of the House. After a long debate it was voted that the paper was a "false, scandalous and seditious libel," and it was ordered to be burned

by the common hangman—a sentence which was subsequently carried out at the Royal Exchange, amid, however, so great a riot that the Sheriff was obliged to seek shelter in the Mansion House.

The resolution of the Commons had in the meanwhile been communicated to the Lords, and it there had a curious sequel; for Lord Sandwich, of all people in the world, rose and formally complained that Wilkes "had violated the most sacred ties of religion as well as decency" by printing in his own house *An Essay on Woman.* A housebreaker expatiating on the sanctity of property, or a cannibal praising vegetarianism, might perhaps be compared with propriety to the Jemmy Twitcher of politics, the erstwhile associate in the Medmenham orgies, raising his voice on behalf of decency and religion. Wilkes might well have re-echoed the cry "save me from my friends!" He appears to have been thoroughly taken by surprise. He had printed but twelve copies of the work privately, and had, as he thought, taken every precaution that it should not leak into greater publicity. But one of his printers had been bribed, and by some means or other contrived to secrete and carry out of the house from time to time certain spoiled sheets which at last made up a complete copy. At first this seems to have been due to merely prurient curiosity; but one of the men into whose hands the thing came showed it to the Rev. Mr.

Kidgell,[1] then Chaplain to Lord March, who in turn laid it before the Secretary of State. Here was another appropriate *censor morum*, the Lord March who was in time to become the notorious 'Old Q' of a thousand unseemly stories and actions.

Wilkes always said that if *The North Briton* had never appeared, the *Essay on Woman* would never have been censured; and that is probably quite true. It was political rancour rather than shocked sensibility that resulted in an incident which caused Wilkes to become an exile for four years. He knew, indeed, what the result was likely to be, and determined to put himself beyond the reach of his enemies.

In the meanwhile, however, he fought another duel. A Mr. Samuel Martin had complained in the House that he had been "stabbed in the dark" by *The North Briton*, and the next day, having received a letter from Wilkes acknowledging that he had written the passage complained of, he sent a challenge to meet him in Hyde Park with pistols. The *rencontre* took place, with the result that Wilkes was hit in the stomach, and so severely that he thought himself to be dying,

[1] Kidgell attempted to justify himself by publishing a pamphlet entitled *A Genuine and Succinct Narrative of a scandalous, obscene, and exceedingly profane Libel entitled "An Essay on Woman,"* which it is said "completely blasted his reputation," or such reputation as he possessed. *A Full and Candid Answer* to this effusion appeared shortly after, doubtless written by Wilkes himself.

insisting on Martin's making his escape, and asserting that his adversary had behaved like a man of honour and that no one should know from him (Wilkes) by whom he had received his hurt. However, the wound proved less serious than was at first supposed; the bullet was extracted, and as soon as he was able to do so Wilkes went off to Paris, whither Martin had already gone, and where, we are told, he met his late opponent in a quite friendly way.

On his arrival in Paris Wilkes first put up at the Hôtel de Saxe, but later went to live at the Rue St. Niçaise. He remained in France during practically the whole of 1764, on January 19th of which year he had been expelled from the House of Commons for writing the famous 'No. 45,' and three days later had been convicted in the Court of King's Bench for republishing it, as well as for writing the no less famous essay. On the following August 5th he was officially outlawed.

For the next four years, therefore, Wilkes was an exile, and after his long stay in Paris he set out on a tour to Naples, of which he has left an interesting account in a series of letters to his daughter, the first of which is dated from Lyons on December 31st, 1764, and the last from the Hôtel de Saxe on September 30th, 1765, the day after he returned to Paris. During his wanderings he visited Turin, Parma, Florence, Rome and Naples, where he arrived on February



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26th, and where he remained till June 27th, proceeding thence by boat to Marseilles and subsequently returning to Paris by way of Geneva. The letters he wrote during his tour, to his daughter and his friends, are full of characteristically acute observations and vivid descriptions of the places where he stayed and the sights he saw.

Back in Paris, he occupied himself with various literary projects. Churchill had died in November 1764, and by his Will he desired " his friend John Wilkes, Esq., to collect and publish " his works, with the remarks and explanations he had already prepared. To these Wilkes added other notes while in Paris ; and although Walpole tells George Montagu that he showed him " some of his notes on Churchill's works, but they contain little more than one note on each poem to explain the subject of it," [1] to us not so familiar with current events as was Walpole there is much that is entertaining and interesting in these commentaries, which, without being exactly critical, are illuminative in other respects, especially for instance in the notes on the *Epistle to William Hogarth,* which gives at least the Wilkes side of the question. In the

[1] This letter is dated Paris, October 16th, 1765, and in it Walpole remarks: " Wilkes is here, and has been twice to see me in my illness. He was very civil, but I cannot say entertained me much. I saw no wit: his conversation shows how little he has lived in good company, and the chief turn of it is the grossest bawdy. He has certainly one merit, notwithstanding the bitterness of his pen, that is, he has no rancour—not even against Sandwich, of whom he talked with the utmost temper."

notes to *The Ghost* there are quoted the letters which passed between Wilkes and Lord Talbot concerning their quarrel and subsequent duel, to which I have before alluded, as well as the description of Sir Francis Dashwood's church at West Wycombe, referred to in the first chapter; and in those to *The Candidate* occurs Wilkes's description of Medmenham Abbey and his account of the institution of the Hell Fire Club there.

It was while in Paris that Wilkes wrote his *Letter to the Electors of the Borough of Aylesbury* (October 22nd, 1764), which he subsequently (1767) revised and had a few copies printed privately for his special friends in England. It deals with the incidents connected with the publication of No. 45 of *The North Briton,* and in it he calls Lord Mansfield his personal enemy and refers to the *Essay on Woman* as an "idle poem." He also issued *A Complete Collection of the Genuine Papers, Letters, &c. in the case of John Wilkes, Esq.*" which was published "chez J. W., Imprimeur, Rue du Colombier, Fauxburgh [*sic*] St. Germain, à l'Hôtel de Saxe" in 1767. His time was also largely occupied in correspondence with his political and private associates, and in his letters may be found many curious and interesting comments on men and matters; as when he terms Rousseau "a ridiculous scribbler." Jean Jacques had certainly grossly abused him, but that should hardly have been a matter of surprise to one who was himself a past

master in the art of invective. He seems, too, to have projected an exhaustive work on Political Liberty, which, according to his scheme sent to Almon, would have embraced the " Sentiments of the European nations on this head." [1] That he feared the interception of letters sent him is proved by his reiterated command to Almon never to send replies through the post but always by some private means. He sends his *Letter to the Duke of Grafton* to be printed, and is gratified at the public approval of it, and he is engaged, he says, on a History of England for which he anticipates a large sale. At this time Wilkes was either staying at a small hotel in the Rue des Saintes Pères or at " a little house near Paris in a sweet situation," where, he tells us, he gives five days a week to the writing of his history. But although he entered into an agreement with Almon for the publication of this work, the introduction was all that was actually published (1768).

Wilkes had been two years abroad when, in 1766, he received through Lord Southampton a message from the Duke of Grafton (then at the Treasury in Lord Chatham's administration, which had succeeded the Rockingham ministry), which he construed into a sort of tacit promise of protection, and he had therefore in the autumn of that year

[1] This, I imagine, to have resulted in that *Origin and Progress of Despotism*, which was subsequently printed at Wilkes's private press in 1773.

returned to England; but finding that the new ministry was no more favourable to him than its predecessor had been, he returned to Paris; and it was at that juncture, suffering under severe disappointment, that he wrote his letter to the Duke of Grafton to which allusion has been made. Since then, two more years had passed when he again determined to go home. He had left Paris and was in The Hague in the December of 1768, whence he made an excursion to his Alma Mater, Leyden, which, he writes his daughter, "received me with raptures and congratulated herself on having produced so illustrious a son!" On January 1st he again writes to his daughter, telling her, *inter alia*, that he intends going to-morrow "on scates to Ryswick." A week later he was in Rotterdam, and by way of Antwerp and Ostend (where he met his friend Cotes and concerted measures with him as to his return) he reached England on February 7th and took up his residence at the house of Mr. Hayley in Great Alie Street, Goodman's Fields.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN WILKES (*Continued*)

SHORTLY after his arrival in London Wilkes wrote a submissive letter to the King, but he received no answer to it, if indeed he expected one, which seems doubtful. This missive was delivered at Buckingham House on March 4th, and just a week later Wilkes offered himself as a candidate for the City, Parliament being dissolved on the 12th. No steps were taken to prevent his appearing publicly on the hustings nor to his being elected to the freedom of the City, which several of his friends had combined to purchase for him. The fact is, the authorities were reluctant to interfere with one so popular with the mob as he, as much through the Government's stupidity as by his own popularity, had become.

On March 16th the election began, and on a show of hands Wilkes was returned, but a poll being demanded he was defeated, although he secured no fewer than 1247 votes—a large number considering that there were as many as seven

candidates. But this want of success did not affect his spirit, and he immediately offered himself as member for Middlesex. The election took place at Brentford on March 28th, and he was returned with an aggregate of 1292 votes.[1]

In the meanwhile the Solicitor to the Treasury had caused a writ to be served on Wilkes, and he gave a written promise to present himself at the King's Bench on the opening of the term, April 20th ; but Lord Mansfield and the other judges agreed that as he had voluntarily presented himself they had no power to commit him, and he was accordingly discharged. This was a further cause for a popular demonstration. Still the bill of outlawry hung over him, and he seems to have thought that Lord Mansfield had determined to establish its legality. This proved not to be the case, however, and the bill was reversed by the unanimous decision of the Court.

But the law had not done with Wilkes by any means. It could afford to be lenient on one count when it was about to exercise its power on another, and when on June 18th he was again brought before it, he was sentenced to pay a fine of £500 in respect of the publication of 'No. 45' and a term of imprisonment of ten calendar months, and another £500 for printing the *Essay on Woman*,

[1] There were two vacancies, and Mr. George Cooke was returned for the other, polling 827 votes, the defeated candidate being Sir William Beauchamp Proctor, with 807 votes.

with a further imprisonment of twelve months, not to be concurrent with the former sentence. He was obliged in addition to find security, himself in £1,000 and with two sureties in £500 each, for his good behaviour for seven years. It was undoubtedly a heavy and vindictive sentence, and many thought it so. But it was the mob that openly espoused his cause. On May 10th the new Parliament met, and the people, thinking that Wilkes would be allowed to leave the prison in order to take his seat, assembled in large numbers to see him on his way to Westminster. Anticipating trouble the Government called out the military, and a collision took place between them and the crowd, in the course of which a young man, mistaken for one of the ringleaders, but who appears really to have had nothing to do with the affair, was shot dead. Wilkes immediately saw his opportunity, and wrote a pamphlet on the occurrence, which he entitled *The Inhuman Massacre in St. George's Fields.* This, however, although printed, was for some reason never published, and therefore only found its way to publicity through those personal friends to whom copies were presented.

In the meanwhile Wilkes, although in prison, was anything but idle, and one of the results of his activity was his *Letter on the public conduct of Mr. Wilkes,* in which he recapitulated, with strictures and the ready wit and sarcasm he always had at

hand, the events which had led to his trial and incarceration. He also drew up a petition to the House of Commons, complaining of the illegality of the treatment he had received, and demanding redress of his grievance. The fact is, he supposed that the intention of the ministry was to expel him from his seat. But nothing had in reality been decided upon until he presented the petition. The consideration of this document was fixed for January 27th, 1769, but in the meanwhile two events had taken place: the one that on January 2nd while in gaol Wilkes had been elected Alderman of Farringdon Without by a big majority, although the Court of Aldermen discussed long and acrimoniously as to whether he was eligible for the post; the other that he had published a certain letter written by Lord Weymouth on April 17th, 1768, to the Chairman of the Lambeth Quarter Sessions, in which the latter was advised to take measures for preserving the peace in that district in view of preventing similar occurrences to those to which the Westminster election had given rise, with the addition of certain prefatory remarks, which the House of Lords and the House of Commons both voted as a libel.

This being so, when Wilkes's petition was read, it was determined to bring him to the Bar of the lower House, and on February 2nd, 1769, he duly made his appearance there. On a motion of Lord Barrington, he was expelled from the House

by 219 votes to 136. This event had other consequences. Pitt, having called Wilkes "the blasphemer of his God and the libeller of his King," was henceforth regarded by him as his enemy; George Grenville's defence of Wilkes was also taken exception to by the latter, who wrote some severe strictures on it which so annoyed Lord Temple, who had done his best to dissuade him from publishing them, that the long friendship of these two men was broken, and they never afterwards spoke to one another.

Wilkes had now become a greater popular hero than ever. He was regarded as a persecuted champion of liberty, and as one whom authority was doing its best to hound out of civic existence. He developed into a sort of dictator, issuing his edicts from the King's Bench with as much assurance of a servile compliance as the King could look for at St. James's. Members of Parliament, aldermen, sheriffs and local mayors were appointed and elected at his nod. A new writ was issued for Middlesex, and he was unanimously re-elected; the House declared the election void, and another writ was issued, again to be followed by his triumphant return. No fewer than four times did this see-saw of civic and court antagonism occur. On the last occasion (April 13th, 1769) it was shown that Wilkes had polled 1143 votes, as against the 296 secured by his opponent, Colonel Luttrell; but the House declared the latter duly elected.

" This was," as Burke described it, " the fifth act of this tragi-comedy—a tragi-comedy acted by His Majesty's servants at the desire of several persons of quality, for the benefit of Mr. Wilkes, and at the expense of the Constitution."

All sorts of things were now done to honour the man who had come to be regarded as the outstanding champion of liberty and the victim of official malice and vindictiveness. He was made a Freemason with much pomp and circumstance; a society which called its members ' Supporters of the Bill of Rights ' was formed, held meetings, and collected subscriptions towards paying the fines in which their hero had been mulcted ;[1] he was invited to become again a candidate for Westminster, and all sorts of publications helped to keep his name and cause constantly and prominently before the public. On November 11th he brought an action against Lord Halifax for false imprisonment and the illegal seizure of his papers, and obtained a verdict of £4000 in respect of his claim.

On April 17th, 1770, Wilkes was at last set at liberty, and for a time took up his residence at Fulham, while his own house in Prince's Court, Great George Street, was being prepared for his reception. A few days later he was sworn in as an

[1] The accounts of the Society show that it had also discharged Wilkes's debts to the amount of £12,000 ; had paid election expenses for him amounting to £2973 ; had paid his two fines amounting to £1000, and had advanced for his support another £1000.

Alderman of the City, and in the following May we find him writing to his daughter, then in Paris, to apprise her of the fact that he was " sitting in the seat of justice for the lord mayor."

Wilkes's life at this period, at least his public life, is reflected in the letters he wrote to his daughter, and " my dearest Polly " is made acquainted with all sorts of facts which her devoted father considered might interest her. She learns, and we, looking over her shoulder, learn, how he has been once at Vauxhall but not to Ranelagh ; how he is beginning to recover from the fatigue of innumerable visits and innumerable dinners (" which," says he, " I abominate ") ; how he had taken a new house in Prince's Court, but cannot get possession till midsummer, and then it will have to be repaired ; how he intends meeting his Polly at Dover, after which they will make an excursion in Kent. Once he dines with the notorious Chevalier D'Eon " and had a very cheerful day " ; at another time he meets that very Republican lady, Mrs. Macaulay. Here is a specimen of his lighter information :—

" Very little material has happened since I wrote last. I find going about not a little troublesome, from the too great partiality of my countrymen. I went last night, for the first time, to a place of public diversion in Soho Square.[1] The company was good but not numerous, owing to a ridotto and

[1] This was, of course, the famous Mrs Cornelys's.

Almack's being the same night. I was highly entertained, and staid till after two; which you know was a scene of great rakery for me. The ladies said that they were ready to pull caps for to dance with me; but I apologised that I had scarcely yet learned even to walk after so long a confinement, much less dance." Then he tells her how he intends spending Whitsun at Bath, "in order to dissipate a little after having all this month dispatched the necessary business."

During the years 1771, 1772 and 1773, we have many letters between Wilkes and his daughter, and the mutual affection shown in this correspondence is, I think, the pleasantest spot in the chequered career of the whilom rake and popular demagogue. In a relatively short account of his life as this must necessarily be, it is impossible to make any long extracts from these letters, or even to repeat a tithe of the interesting facts recorded, or the notable people mentioned. But one may in passing, as it were, note that these range from such public matters as Woodfall's trial for the publication of Junius's celebrated letter in June 1770, to a request that Polly shall bring home from Paris some dinner and dessert knives and forks; and thanks for her civilities to her young cousin, who was in reality the boy Wilkes elsewhere calls Jack, an illegitimate son of his own. Concerning this youth's progress in the polite arts his father shows no little anxiety, as thus: "Pray mention if Jack

has any ear, and if he has learned any steps yet ; " and again, " pray desire your cousin to send me a little specimen of his drawing . . . and tell me if he is ever likely to dance half as well as his fair cousin, Mademoiselle Wilkes."

Wilkes was a dandy, and took no little pains to make up for the ugliness of his face by the fashionable and becoming nature of his dress. " Will you," he writes his daughter on one occasion, " be so good as to see Baron Holbach, or write to him, to beg him to purchase for me scarlet cloth enough, of the finest sort and colour (I think it is called Julien's dye), for a complete suit of clothes—coat, waistcoat and two pair of breeches ; likewise, the most fashionable gold buttons for the whole. I purchased the finest blue cloth for the baron here . . . however, beg the favour of him to give you a little note of what it comes to, with the buttons." It is amusing to think of the famous encyclopædist, the friend of Diderot and d'Alembert, " the *premier maître d'hôtel de la philosophie*," as Abbé Galiani once termed him on account of his famous dinners, scouring Paris for clothes suitable for Mr. John Wilkes to appear in at Vauxhall or the assemblies of Mrs. Cornelys in Soho Square.

Miss Wilkes had arrived in England in the August of 1770, but the letters which her father wrote to her when away from London, or when she was away, are as frequent and affectionate as when the Channel divided them. Wilkes had been visiting

some estates he owned in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, and in February 1771 he writes from Upwell notifying his return and exclaiming: "I shall dine with my dearest daughter on Sunday at four, and wish that she would order a leg of pork." Later in the year he dates a letter from the Bull at Rochester (innocent as yet of Mr. Pickwick's personality), and in other letters are remarks on the improvements at Bath, the beauty of Mr. Hamilton's gardens, the famous Pain's Hill near Cobham, which he calls an Elysium; and details of the Isle of Wight, where at Ride (*sic*) he found "bad pens, paper and ink, but good fish and wine." There is an intimacy, a charm and an affection displayed in these letters not often to be found in the correspondence of far more respectable fathers and their daughters, which should be remembered when Wilkes is judged by the intemperate effusions of his earlier days and his share in the orgies of the Hell Fire Club.

It is time to turn again from these domesticities to Wilkes's public career. On June 24th, 1771, he was elected Sheriff of London and Middlesex, and three years later he became Lord Mayor of London, the office of Lady Mayoress being sustained by 'his dearest Polly.' His election to this high office was received by the mass of citizens with 'the greatest applause' we are told, nor was any Lady Mayoress more esteemed than the young lady who knew so well how to carry on the duties

of her position with charm and dignity. According to one authority, "a more polite and brilliant Mayoralty the City had not seen since the days of Beckford."

In the meanwhile Wilkes had not been permitted to take his seat in the House of Commons, to which he had been repeatedly re-elected; but on his elevation to the highest civic office Parliament seems to have thought better of the matter, and on December 2nd he was allowed to do so, and he set himself to bring about a reversal of that resolution which had declared his incapacity from sitting in the Commons "as subversive of the rights of the whole body of electors." I may here mention that year after year he brought forward his claims, but that not until the year 1782, the Rockingham Government being then in power, was he successful. In the May of that year, however, he triumphed; and all the declarations, orders and resolutions on the Middlesex elections were expunged from the journals of the House.[1] By this victory Wilkes was not only able to rehabilitate himself, but also to obtain a recognition of the right of a constituency to return its chosen member in spite of ministerial opposition. To-day the very questioning of this right would appear an anomaly: then it was only achieved by the firm and determined attitude of a man who, however much he may have been to blame in many aspects of his life, had been

[1] *Dictionary of English History.*

for a number of years the victim of an arbitrary and vindictive power. Nor was this the only principle which Wilkes was successful in establishing. It will be within the reader's knowledge that in those days the right of reporting the debates of the House had always been denied by Parliament, and that printers who had succeeded in obtaining such reports and printing them were prosecuted. The absurdity and injustice of this had long been recognised, and indeed had become so acute when the Corporation took up the matter originally, that Lord Mayor Crosby and Alderman Oliver, who were both Members of Parliament, had been apprehended (March 1771) in consequence of their championship of the cause of free-printing, and committed to the Tower. When, however, Wilkes took up the matter the authorities shrank from a fresh contest with so redoubtable an opponent, and the imprisoned members were released by an order of the Parliament, which thus signalised its own defeat.

Wilkes's most important speech in Parliament was a defence of Warren Hastings on the question of that impeachment which resulted in the long trial that began in 1788. I say his most important speech, for it was the one on which he appears to have prided himself most. But as a Parliamentary speaker he was not by any means an unqualified success; and although he was duly returned for Middlesex whenever he put himself forward as a candidate, his power was less felt within the walls

of Westminster than without, and he remains among those who have been able to persuade large numbers, but who have not succeeded in impressing themselves on a limited assembly. He was a demagogue and a fighter rather than a reasoner and a debater, and he was abler in any case with his pen than with his tongue, unless that tongue was addressing those rather swayed by their feelings than by their intellect. To compare him with a later man, one indeed in all other respects his antithesis, he was, taken by and large, as great a failure in the House of Commons as was John Stuart Mill.

In 1777 the then Chamberlain of the City, Sir Theodore Janssen, died, and Wilkes became a candidate for the post. He was not successful, a certain Alderman Hopkins being elected. That gentleman, however, died in 1779, and Wilkes was then immediately chosen, being sworn in to the office on December 2nd of that year. In the conduct of his duties it fell to Wilkes on various occasions to address those on whom the Freedom of the City was conferred, the first of these being Mr. Pitt, who received the honour on February 28th, 1784, and at various times Lord Cornwallis, Lord Howe, Lord Nelson and others less memorable were among those whom it became Wilkes's duty to address in laudatory terms. On such occasions, and in others appertaining to the Mayoralty, he showed himself fully qualified for the duties of his position.

With the attainment of that position he may be said to have sailed into the harbour of civic refuge. A change had come over his character and, as Nichols says, "his attention was now diverted from the storms of party to the calmer and more useful duties of his office." From this moment, too, dated the discontinuance of his activities in the Press. The bulk of these may be estimated by the fact that he presented to Nichols the collection he had been forming from 1768 to 1779, and it filled no fewer than thirty-five folio volumes carefully annotated.[1] So we find the erstwhile feverish agitator, the hardly less feverish man of pleasure, the patriotic demagogue, and the active opponent of oppression and tyranny, developing into the calm elderly man, withdrawing occasionally to the little house he had taken in Kensington Gore, cultivating his garden, and amusing himself with his aviary and the study of natural history. His residence at Kensington was known as Hamilton Lodge, and it was looked after by Miss Arnold, the mother of another of his daughters named Harriet. Here he was visited by many well-known people, and he himself alludes to one such occasion on which he says: "Mr. Swinburne dined with me . . . with Monsieur Barthelemi and the Counts Woronzow and Nesselrode. I gave them chicken-turtle, dressed at the London Tavern, a haunch of venison,

[1] This collection was subsequently stolen, and sold for waste paper to a cheesemonger !

and was served by James and Samuel from Prince's Court, who behaved very well. The day passed very cheerfully, and they all expressed themselves highly delighted." While staying in what was then an almost countrified district, Wilkes was accustomed to walk to the City from Knightsbridge, and his well-known face and figure seldom failed to attract attention, especially as he not infrequently wore the scarlet and buff suit with a rosette in his cocked hat, and military boots, such as he had donned in his earlier militia days.

His personal appearance at this period has been thus described : " He was tall, meagre, and sallow, with an underhung, grinning, good-humoured jaw, and an obliquity of vision which, however objectionable in the eyes of opponents, occasioned the famous vindication from a partisan that its possessor did not 'squint more than a gentleman should!'" Among the numerous friends who visited him at Knightsbridge was Sir Philip Francis, and Wilkes's daughter remembered that he once cut off a lock of her hair, and she had " an obscure imagination that her father once said she had met Junius."[1]

Besides this suburban retreat (for it was suburban then) Wilkes possessed a little *pied à terre* at Sandown in the Isle of Wight called Sandham Cottage, a place which he amused himself by embellishing in all sorts of ways, by improving

[1] Leigh Hunt.

the gardens and adorning them with classical inscriptions.

The mention of classical inscriptions reminds me that he now gave up much of his leisure to literary activities, of which one of the products was an edition of Catullus, long a favourite poet of his. This edition, based on that published at Padua in 1737, is typographically perfect, and Wilkes was exceedingly pleased with it, presenting copies to, *inter alia*, Pitt, Sir Joseph Banks, Seward and Warton. It was limited to 100 copies, three of which were printed on vellum, and appeared in 1788. Two years later an edition of Theophrastus[1] appeared, also limited to 100 copies (together with four on vellum), and was a companion volume to his Catullus. Lord Mansfield, Warren Hastings, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the great book collector Cracherode and others were among those who sent him letters of thanks and congratulations for the copies he had presented to them.

It was during this year (1790) that he gave up his house in Chapel Court and removed to No. 30 (now 35) Grosvenor Square, at the corner of South Audley Street, whence, as he had been accustomed to do from Chapel Court and Hamilton Lodge, he walked almost daily to his duties in the City ; and here, in what Almon calls this ' salubrious situa-

[1] At a book sale a copy of Wilkes's edition of Theophrastus having been put up and highly praised by the auctioneer, Porson exclaimed : " Pooh, pooh, it is like its editor—of no character." *Porsoniana.*

tion,' he resided during the winter months till his death. Angelo in his *Reminiscences* thus refers to this residence: "Mr. Wilkes removed to the corner of South Audley Street, with one front leading into Grosvenor Square, and the last time I had the honour to meet him was immediately after the Mount Street rioters broke the glass of his parlour windows, which perhaps were the most valuable of any in the world; for the whole of the lower sashes, composed of very large panes, were of plate glass, engraved with Eastern subjects in the most beautiful taste. These were naturally the more valued by Mr. Wilkes as they were the ingenious labour of his daughter." It was at a dinner here in January 1792 that Wilkes read to Dr. Warton and some other guests some specimens of his version of Anacreon which, however, he never completed, leaving it to Thomas Moore to bring out the best known English version of the bard with whose Epicurean philosophy both the patriot and the poet had so much in sympathy. Wilkes's last literary production was of a very different character, being *A Supplement to the Miscellaneous Works of Mr. Gibbon,* which had, however, been originally printed as a number of *The Observer* in 1780, but was first issued as a separate publication in 1796. This, like the edition of Catullus and Theophrastus, was privately printed, and was only intended as presents for his friends.

Those friends had by now become legion, and

ranged through all ranks of society, for, as has been said, Wilkes was at length "reconciled to every reputable opponent, from the King downwards;" and at his death, which occurred in Grosvenor Square on December 26th, 1797, he had reached a position of fame and popularity hardly second to that of anyone in the United Kingdom.

It is indeed difficult to name a man whose personality was more marked and whose influence on his generation was more extended. The profligate member of the Hell Fire Club had become merged in the patriot and the determined opponent of tyranny; the writer of the *Essay on Woman* had become forgotten in the victim of oppression and vindictiveness. One of the reasons for his widespread popularity[1] was his innate good humour. Just as he once said that with half-an-hour's start he would get the better of the best-looking man in a woman's good graces, so it was that irresistible amiability and brilliancy of conversation which helped largely to wear down the preconceived adverse opinions of many who, like Johnson, found themselves unable to withstand the charm of his manner and his talk.

[1] During his lifetime, especially when in prison, Wilkes received innumerable gifts. Subscriptions were raised to defray his fines, contributions came from such far-flung places as St. Christopher and South Carolina; presents were made him by all sorts of people, from the members of The Cave in Maiden Lane and the Duchess of Queensbury to Sir Robert Strange the engraver, who sent him specimens of his skill, and Garrick, who sent him seats for his performances. In 1777 the City voted him a silver cup of the value of £100.

The power of his invective (often as tremendous as that of Junius himself) and the clarity and conciseness of his style may be read in *The North Briton* and elsewhere, and is only to be equalled by his wit, of which many examples are recorded. Gibbon, who once spent an evening with him when they were both militia officers, says: "I scarcely ever met with a better companion: he has inexhaustible spirits, infinite wit and humour, and a great deal of knowledge." An even better proof of his charm of manner and conversation is preserved in the anecdote which tells how wagers used to be laid, that from the time he quitted his house in Chapel Court till he reached the Guildhall no one would leave him without a hearty laugh or at least a smile. Once a man who had an appointment with Lord Sandwich kept him waiting, but when it was discovered that he had been dining with Wilkes, Sandwich exclaimed: "Wilkes has so often made me break appointments with others that it is but fair he should for once make a person break his appointment with me."

His wit, both verbal and written, may be illustrated by two stories. Boswell, dining on one occasion with the Sheriffs at the Old Bailey, complained that he had had his pocket handkerchief stolen. "Pooh, pooh!" remarked Wilkes, "it is nothing but the ostentation of a Scotchman to let the world know that he possesses a pocket handkerchief;" while Horne Tooke, having challenged

Wilkes who was then Sheriff, received the following reply : " Sir, I do not think it my business to cut the throat of every desperado that may be tired of his life ; but, as I am at present High Sheriff of the City of London, it may happen that I shall shortly have an opportunity of attending you in my official capacity, in which case I will answer for it that *you shall have no ground* to complain of my endeavours to serve you."

Wilkes's popularity with the mob was extraordinary. Apparently he could do anything he liked with it. It responded to him as a violin does to a skilful player, and an illustration of this power is contained in the story which tells how when Luttrell was standing with him on the hustings at Brentford, Wilkes (who was quite ready to sink political animosity in friendly converse) asked him whether he thought there were more fools or rogues among the crowd beneath him. Luttrell replied, " I'll tell them what you say, and put an end to you ; " but perceiving that Wilkes was in no way perturbed by the threat, he added, " Surely you don't mean to say you could stand here one hour after I had done so ? " " Why," said Wilkes, " you would not be alive one instant after." " How so ? " asked Luttrell. " Why," was the reply, " I should merely tell them it was a fabrication, and they would destroy you in the twinkling of an eye."

At his own ugly face he was in no way disturbed,

and he used to say that it took him just half-an-hour to talk it away. The old lady who, seeing his effigy suspended before a public house, exclaimed, "Ah! Wilkes swings everywhere but where he ought," had evidently not come under the personal influence of the charmer! Anecdotes of him illustrating his wit, his intelligence, his good manners and, it may be added, his innate profligacy, are as the sands of the sea. Let me close this chapter by a vignette of him drawn by a young man who was also to become famous, and who, dying in 1855, links up, as it were, the opponent of Lord Bute almost with our own times.

"One morning, when I was a lad," writes Samuel Rogers, "Wilkes came into our banking-house to solicit my father's vote. My father happened to be out, and I as his representative spoke to Wilkes. At parting Wilkes shook hands with me, and I felt proud of it for a week after. He was quite as ugly and squinted as much as his portraits[1] make him, but he was very gentlemanly in appearance and manners. I think I see him at this moment, walking through the crowded streets of the City as Chamberlain on his way to Guildhall, in a scarlet coat, military boots, and a bag-wig—the hackney coachmen in vain calling out to him, 'A coach, your honour.'"

The public career of Wilkes has, as I have shown,

[1] The best remembered is, of course, Hogarth's famous caricature, here reproduced.

overshadowed his private life, if he really can be said to have had any private life. Like many a man of great position in those days, he was a rake and a profligate, especially during those earlier years when an unsuitable marriage threw him into all kinds of dissipation. He left two natural children : a son who went by the name of John Smith, and was the result of a *liaison* with a woman named Catherine Smith, who for some years acted as Wilkes's housekeeper ; and a daughter named Harriet, the offspring of a Miss Arnold, who lived with Wilkes at Bath and subsequently looked after his house at Kensington. But the fact that he carefully attended to the welfare of both these illegitimate children, and was besides a devoted father to his daughter Mary—the Polly of so much tender correspondence, and of such an intimate and affectionate association—helps to differentiate him from those rakes with whom ingrained selfishness was largely the cause of their ill-doing.

Somehow, one cannot but have a tender feeling for Wilkes, for after all he did more than most men to secure a meed of civil liberty for his countrymen at a time when subversive and retrograde measures threatened that liberty in no uncertain way. He possessed good manners, good humour, and wit, which, when all is said and done, should atone for much. He was a man of a naturally affectionate disposition, but he hated tyranny; and in his long battle against it he was led into acts and words

which, if they require an excuse, may at least find it in the cause in which they were done and said. No excuse can be put forward for his share in the Medmenham orgies, although, to be sure, that share has never been shown to be more than an intermittent one—the seeking for some new experience, and ending in what I always think was an attempt to bring those unholy orgies to a conclusion.

With regard to the *Essay on Woman*, the fact of its writing cannot be condoned. But it must be remembered that Wilkes did not intend it to be circulated, and it was a political plot which made of it an excellent excuse for his opponents to drag him down. Not dissimilar circumstances have attended the careers of other notable men (two occurred in our own time), when private matters were made the basis of political enmity and were used for the purposes of political warfare. Without attempting to excuse Wilkes's share in this unfortunate affair, it must not be forgotten that according to Walpole, no friendly critic, Thomas Potter had an equal hand in the production. But Potter is forgotten, and Wilkes therefore has to bear the sole onus of having produced a libidinous book in which indecency and profanity fight for mastery with about equal success.[1]

[1] "*The Essay on Woman, in Three Epistles.* London: Printed for the author and sold by Mr. Gretton in Bond Street and Mr. Pottinger in Paternoster Row, 1763. Printed in red with an obscene print on the title page." Such is Lowndes's description. It was a kind of parody on Pope's *Essay on Man*, with notes pretended to have been written by Bishop Warburton.

It is all such old history that Wilkes's mouldering bones in Grosvenor Chapel may at long last be left at peace, and only his services to his fellow citizens, as recorded on the obelisk at the east end of Fleet Street, be remembered, as are remembered his many brilliant qualities and his perennial good humour.

CHAPTER V

CHARLES CHURCHILL

WHEN Hogarth, smarting under Churchill's attacks,[1] produced his print of *The Bruiser*, he was perhaps unfairly, but certainly very clearly, indicating something in the character of the remarkable man and great satirist who finds himself, as I think he would have been quite willing to do, among our galaxy of rakes. Churchill was a clergyman, but he was so in spite of himself, in spite of his leanings, in spite of his whole tenor of thought. At the age of thirty-three he had closed a life which had been on the one hand a tragic failure, on the other a brilliant success; and if he has left a name on which many private blemishes rest, he has bequeathed to a rather regardless posterity a bulk of satirical writing hardly to be matched in our literature. Like many men of genius he was a mass of contradictions, but with all he possessed the elements of that greatness which is preserved in his works but

[1] *Epistle to William Hogarth.*

which was so painfully absent from his life. He comes before us here in the quality of rake chiefly through his friendship with men of whom there is no gainsaying the right to that title, and as having for a time been numbered among the members of the Hell Fire Club, which sullied so many reputations and has stuck like a burr on to not a few illustrious names.

Charles Churchill was the eldest of the three sons of the Reverend Charles Churchill,[1] Rector of Rainham near Grays in Essex, who had been for a number of years also Curate and Lecturer of St. John the Evangelist, Smith Square, Westminster. This additional office necessitated his having a house in London, and it was in Vine Street, Westminster (now incorporated in Romney Street), that Charles was born in the February (the actual day is not recorded) of 1731. He was early designed by his father for the Church, and at the age of eight was sent as a day boy to Westminster, where Cowper, Warren Hastings, Richard Cumberland, George Colman, Bonnell Thornton and Robert Lloyd were among his school-fellows.

Churchill is described at this early period of his career as being a robust, manly, broad-faced little fellow, rather premature for his age, and taking a leading part in the games of his playmates as well as being able and diligent in his work. If

[1] Churchill's mother is said to have been Scotch, which, in view of her son's *Prophecy of Famine*, is rather curious.

not the good boy of the story, he was perhaps something better: a normal youth with robust tendencies and a quick-witted brain, and he seems to have been as popular with the masters as he was with his companions. It is rather curious that Cumberland, who somewhere calls Churchill the Dryden of his age, in enumerating the boys at Westminster in his day, does not mention Churchill, who was just a year older than himself and therefore must have been his contemporary there for some years.

Even in these early days the boy, in common with quite a number of others at Westminster, had a turn for verse and was among that band of "little poets at Westminster" who strove "to set a distich upon six and five." Churchill *père* had, however, quite other views for his eldest son: he intended him for the Church. The fact that this was an ill-chosen profession for such a lad did not seem to occur to him, and, like many a parent before and since, he committed the grave mistake of forcing his son into a way of life suitable to his own views but really quite otherwise, considering the boy's temperament. As Churchill himself wrote in later years, he was:

> "Bred for the Church, and for the gown decreed,
> Ere it was known that I should learn to read."

From this initial error may, I think, be dated many of the disasters that attended him during his short life.

When but fifteen he became a candidate for admission on the foundation at Westminster, and went in head of the election.[1] His abilities were indeed conspicuous; and there is a story of how, having to compose and recite a poetical declaration in Latin as a punishment for some youthful indiscretion, he acquitted himself so well that he actually gained the praise of the masters for what was really in the nature of an exercise in discipline. Forster, speaking of him at this period of his career, says: "This boy had noble qualities for a better chosen career. Thus early he had made it manifest that he could see for himself and feel for others; that he had strong sensibility and energy of intellect; that where he had faith he had steadiness of purpose and enthusiasm: but that closely neighbouring his powers were vehemence, will, and passion; and that these made him confident, inflexible and very hard to be controlled;" and he adds: "From the compelled choice now put before him one of two results was sure. He would resist or he would succumb: in the one case, boasting exemption from vice, would become himself the victim of the worst of vices; or in the other, with violent recoil from the hypocrisies, would outrage the proprieties of life." In excuse for Churchill the father, it may be suggested that he was (like many fathers) the last properly to estimate the character of his son; the son,

[1] Tooke.

on the other hand, was too young to know his own mind and to oppose himself to his father's wishes.

Thus at the age of eighteen young Churchill, with a view of entering the Church, stood for a studentship at Merton, but failed to satisfy the examiners. It has been suggested that he showed impertinence to the authorities and exhibited his contempt for the trifling questions set him by affecting ignorance. The real reason for his rejection, however, was an altogether different and unsuspected one. It had been discovered that only a few months before the examination Churchill had contracted a Fleet marriage with a young girl named Scot, living in Westminster. From this unfortunate circumstance may be dated the tragedy—the series of tragedies —of his life. Encumbered by a wife whose ideas and temperament were wholly alien from his own, he found himself while yet a boy faced with the responsibilities of manhood, and through this initial error unable to resist his father's wishes. That father's feelings when he learned what had happened may be imagined. He was, however, essentially a good and forbearing man, and he did the best thing possible under the circumstances: he received his son and daughter-in-law into his house in Vine Street. But a condition was made, that condition being that Charles should at once take steps towards following the calling parentally marked out for him. With this view he was entered for Trinity, Cambridge; but for some

reason he never took up residence, and for a year he remained in London, qualifying for ordination. Later he retired to Sunderland, where he is said to have relieved the tedium of theological study by indulging in what are called 'favourite poetical amusements;' he was already trying his 'prentice hand in the art in which he was destined to become famous.

In 1753, being then twenty-two, he returned to London, according to Tooke, with the object of taking possession of some money belonging or bequeathed to his wife. It must have been but a small amount, as it does not seem to have materially improved his worldly position. Forster indeed thinks that the London journey was made rather because the amusements and delights of the metropolis tempted one who had already experienced their fascinations, and he suggests that Churchill's "now large and stalwart figure was oftener seen at theatres than chapels." Indeed, there is little doubt that the budding parson was a *habitué* of the Drury Lane of Garrick and Foote, Mrs. Pritchard and Mrs. Clive, and the Covent Garden of Barry and Macklin, Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Vincent; while he may have already made acquaintance with 'the Bedford under the piazza' when visiting the latter playhouse, a place which later became one of his favourite resorts.

However, true to his promise to his father, and having reached the necessary age, he became

ordained and returned to Sunderland in deacon's orders. Shortly after he became curate at South Cadbury in Somersetshire. Here he remained till 1756, when, owing to his good behaviour and a reputation he had already achieved for learning, although he possessed no 'varsity degree, he was ordained priest by Dr. Sherlock, Bishop of London, a consummation, one imagines, not wholly arrived at without parental influence. Shortly afterwards he took up his father's curacy at Rainham, where, with his wife and the two sons she had borne him, he, to use his own words, " prayed and starved on forty pounds a year "—a sum, it will be remembered, on which another clergyman was described as " passing rich."

His poverty was now his chief anxiety, and in order to ease the *res angusta domi* he opened a school, the drudgery of which to one of his nature was such that in later years he said he wondered he was ever able to submit to it. However, matters were destined to change before he could realise if school-mastering was to be a success in his hands. In 1758 his father died, and although he died intestate and had probably little to leave between his wife[1] and his three sons, the event caused a change in Charles's prospects, notwithstanding that monetarily those prospects were in no way particularly brilliant. In respect for the old man's memory, however, the parishioners of

[1] His wife survived till 1770.

St. John's, Smith Square, elected his son to succeed him, and thus at the end of 1758 Charles Churchill became Curate and Lecturer of his father's old church.

The position was worth something under a hundred a year, and with the additional expense of living in London as against vegetating in the country, could have been but a small improvement on Churchill's Rainham income. That this was so is evidenced by the fact that he undertook the position of teacher 'in the English tongue' to the young ladies at Mrs. Dennis's boarding school at Nos. 24 and 25 Queen Square—a seminary so famous in its day as to be known as 'The Ladies' Eton.' We are told that he conducted himself in his new employment "with all the decorum becoming his clerical profession." The same authority states that "as a parochial minister he performed his duties with punctuality, while in the pulpit he was plain, rational, and emphatic." But one fears that Mr. Tooke, who makes these statements, doth protest overmuch. Churchill himself was under no illusions about the matter. He confesses to having been both an idle parish priest and a dull and tiresome preacher, and in a famous line is not above stating that

> "Sleep at my bidding crept from pew to pew;"

while in that *Dedication to Warburton* in which the line occurs, he confesses that he had no enthusiasm for his profession, which rather from necessity than choice he had in an idle hour agreed to enter upon.

The fact is, of course, that Churchill was doing what he had no heart or inclination to do, and success in anything never lies that way. To do him justice, he never seeks to excuse himself by setting up as the possessor of virtues, which he knew he could not boast. The whole trouble lay, as has been said, in an uncongenial occupation and an alien direction of thought, and the victim for a time struggled in the toils of necessity because there seemed no other opening for which he was suitable. He was soon to discover that in his brain lay the means of at least one form of emancipation. Conscious of his unsuitability for the post he was now filling,[1] he was yet obliged to persevere in it as well as he could, for it seemed his only means of subsistence ; and with a character and inclination anything but suitable to the Church, he found himself tied hand and foot to her service. Had Churchill been condemned to pass his days in a country parsonage he might have eaten his heart out in some rural solitude and have passed to the unobservant as a quite adequate parish priest. The return to London and its distractions changed all this, and one thing that helped towards this change in particular was the friendship which he revived with his school-fellow Robert Lloyd.

Like Churchill, Lloyd had been a school-master under compulsion ; like Churchill too, he had

[1] The publication of twelve of his sermons proves them to have been of a quite commonplace character.

literary ambitions; unlike Churchill, he was not tied down to an uncongenial pursuit, and he gave up his post of usher in order to embark on that of author. The success of his poem *The Actor* not unnaturally led him to regard his future as assured, and without much balance, a total disregard of prudence, an eccentric turn of mind and a generous happy-go-lucky nature, he was led into all sorts of excesses. It was in the midst of these that Churchill now found him and recommenced the friendship first formed at Westminster, and it was not long before he found himself associated with his friend in the embarrassments which dog the steps of the improvident. He became hopelessly involved in debt, and unfortunately for him he had no restraining or guiding hand in his home; indeed, Dr. Kippis says that it was always understood in Westminster "that Mrs. Churchill's imprudence kept too near a pace with that of her husband." Duns harassed him; all sorts of subterfuges were employed to elude these myrmidons; his house, with an unsympathetic woman at the head of it, was no home; and gradually his self-respect vanished with his affection, and he plunged into the dissipated society with which Lloyd had surrounded himself and which eagerly welcomed his big and rather boisterous friend.

There were the elements of a determined rake in Churchill's character; and now, with his credit



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[*face p.* 104.]

gone and with no domestic influence to restrain him, he might well have sunk in the whirlpool of bankruptcy and profligacy that seemed destined to overwhelm him. But at this juncture a friend appeared in the person of Dr. Lloyd, Robert Lloyd's father, then second master at Westminster. This good man made a strenuous effort to save his young friend. He interviewed his creditors, persuading them to accept a composition of their claims, and he advanced the money necessary to satisfy them. Forster suggests with some reason that Dr. Lloyd hoped perhaps by doing all this to save his son as well as to succour Churchill. If so it was a vain hope, and if successful in staving off the threatened bankruptcy from the latter, it was all he was able to achieve : young Lloyd threw up his position as usher and Churchill became formally separated from his wife, both determining to risk their all on the profession of their choice.

The first effort by which Churchill endeavoured to gain the public ear was *The Bard,* a poem in the Hudibrastic style so favoured at that period. It was offered to Waller, a bookseller of some standing in Fleet Street, who, however, contemptuously rejected it. As Churchill himself would never subsequently permit its publication, it may be assumed that on consideration he agreed with Waller's verdict. Nothing daunted (indeed he was a man whom little could daunt) by this failure, he set himself to write *The Conclave,* a satire on

the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Although more to the bookseller's taste than *The Bard,* the publication of this second piece was prevented by the fear of a prosecution for libel, and again Churchill was obliged to cast about for a new subject on which to vent his remarkable powers of satire.

He had been for some time an inveterate haunter of the playhouses ; there he found much that laid itself open to his criticism and invective ; and the success of his friend Lloyd's *Actor* showed him that he would be on safer ground in attacking players than he had been in satirising prelates. After two months' close attendance at the theatres he produced *The Rosciad,* which, after being refused by one or two booksellers, was published, greatly daring, by himself, and appeared anonymously in the March of 1761. Its success was instantaneous : " Men upon town," says Forster, " spoke of its pungency and humour ; men of higher mark found its manly verse an unaccustomed pleasure ; mere playgoers had its criticism to discuss ; and discontented Whigs in disfavour at Court for the first time these fifty years gladly welcomed a spirit that might help to give discontent new terrors and Revolution principles new vogue." The world of London, especially the theatrical world, was agog as to the identity of the author ; and the anonymity of the poem gave it an added spice of excitement and interest ; it became the talk of the

town, the chief subject of discussion in every coffee-house and every green-room.

Reading *The Rosciad* to-day, when all the enmities it reveals, all the weaknesses and meanness it exhibits, are as forgotten as the persons adumbrated, it is still a masterly example of satire; and some of its full-lengths and vignettes may be favourably compared with what Dryden and Pope have left us in a not dissimilar direction. No longer do the names of Fitzgerald and Wedderburn, Yates and Mossop stir us; and so only stir us in a general, rather academic, way the famous invective on the first, and the blows, here heavy as a cudgel, there swift and piercing as a rapier, with which the rest are assailed. But even we can still be stirred in a more direct manner when the names of Barry and Quin, and, above all, Garrick, appear among those gibbeted in this amazing performance. It can therefore well be understood what a sensation was caused by *The Rosciad* at a time when all these men were as much in the public eye as (say) the late Mr. Clement Scott, Sir Henry Irving and Sir Herbert Tree were in our own. Garrick was kindly dealt with and appears to have received the fact with overdue complacency, remarking that no doubt the author had treated him thus with a view to the freedom of the theatre, an unlucky remark which was duly reported to Churchill and had results. The great actor recognised that the un-

known castigator was one to be reckoned with, and that, if he himself had escaped, the theatrical world as a whole was threatened by a dangerously able critic.

In the meanwhile nobody knew who the author was. Lloyd and Colman were suggested as being obviously responsible for the poem, but hardly had this *dictum* been pronounced by the critical reviewers than an advertisement appeared announcing that Charles Churchill was the real Simon Pure, and that there would appear forthwith his *Apology addressed to the Critical Reviewers*. The month was not out before this second effusion was published.

If the public had cause to suppose that a new power had arisen in the world of letters when *The Rosciad* appeared, that supposition was confirmed by *The Apology*, in which Smollett was attacked with acerbity and even Garrick, who had escaped fairly well in the earlier piece, was threatened. The bruiser (as Hogarth was later to depict him) had entered the ring, and was laying about him with such effect that the public made, as it were, a circle in which to stand and enjoy such an exhibition of fisticuffs. But the victims were in sore straits, and by excuses and protestations did their best to ward off further blows. That famous description of *The Strollers*, which anticipated and surpassed Crabbe's treatment of a similar theme, was taken to heart by many a less famous histrion,

and all were on their best behaviour and did their best when the redoubtable Churchill went to the play and sat

"In foremost row before the astonish'd pit."[1]

Indeed, there is a story of the actor Davies apologising to Garrick for putting him out when they were acting together in *Cymbeline* and giving as his excuse his "accidentally seeing Mr. Churchill in the pit," a fact which wholly disconcerted him.

The profits from *The Rosciad* and *The Apology* are said to have amounted to no less than £1000, and with this sum Churchill was able—and to his credit he actually did it—to make repayment to Dr. Lloyd and also to his earlier creditors. In the course of a couple of months he had become famous, and discarding his clerical attire he perambulated the town in a blue coat with metal buttons, a gold laced waistcoat, and a gold laced hat and ruffles. No wonder his parishioners were scandalised and invoked the aid of the Bishop to remonstrate with him. Indeed, he himself seems to have realised the impropriety of his conduct, and it was not long before he resigned a living in which he had no interest and left a profession for which he had an actual distaste. Much more was it to his satisfaction to walk about with a bludgeon and to feel himself free to use it on any who should attempt to resent by force of arms the bludgeoning of his bitter satire. That satire suggested reprisals

[1] Arthur Murphy's *Ode to the Naiads of Fleet Ditch.*

in kind, and all sorts of anti-Churchill literature appeared in the form of Anti-Rosciads, Triumvirates, Examiners and Churchilliards, among the large bulk of which effusions the *Churchill Dissected* hints that this change of dress was made because he feared to be known. No greater mistake could have been made. So far from fearing to be known, he gloried in his work and his physical power to look after himself, and he struts before us the unfrocked bully of literature, the burly bruiser of the painter's satire.

As he had left the Church, so he seems now to have given himself up to a mad dissipation, as it were, to set the seal on the irrevocable divorce. At a later time he showed some regret and even repentance for the course in which he had embarked; but with the glory and profits of his first successes full upon him he denied himself no indulgence, and wine and women were the resources of his leisure hours. But he felt that some justification for his conduct was due to the public, and he made it in his next publication, a poem entitled *Night*, which he addressed to his friend Robert Lloyd and which appeared in October 1761.

It was indirectly due to this poem that the friendship of Churchill and Wilkes sprang up. The piece had been suggested by *The Day* of Armstrong, the friend of the demagogue, in which animadversions on the poet were included. Wilkes immediately took the opportunity of calling on

Churchill and pointing out that he (Wilkes) had no sympathy with these strictures, and besides that he was quite sure Armstrong, who was then out of England, never intended his verses for publication. The friendship thus formed became a very close and affectionate one, and was not interrupted till the day of Churchill's death.

As we are here not so much concerned with Churchill the poet as with Churchill the man, the significance of *Night* lies chiefly in this: that it brought into close relationship two men whose characters were in many respects similar but who had approached their common standpoint from entirely different directions. Both were born fighters, both possessed a vein of sensuality which ran through and vitiated many of their actions. Wilkes no doubt realised the advantages of enlisting on his side one who had already shown such marked gifts of satire and invective; Churchill was glad to be able to have a fresh channel in which to exhibit those powers and was happy enough to enlist himself in Wilkes's cause without, probably, having any special sympathy with his political aspirations. There was, too, another reason for the association. Both men were largely rakes at heart, and Churchill, who was by now wholly identifying himself with a life in direct contradiction to his calling as a parson, was quite ready to enter into that *milieu* of profligacy in which Wilkes was at this time a marked figure.

One of these centres was the Hell Fire Club. Now this fraternity, as we have seen, became extinct in 1762, when its head and front, Sir Francis Dashwood, succeeded to the peerage as Lord le Despencer. On the other hand, it is clear that Churchill first made the acquaintance of Wilkes in the autumn of 1761. Having done so, he no doubt joined his friend at Medmenham. But as we have also seen, the regular orgies there were confined to two occasions of a week each every year. So that at the most Churchill could only have taken part in them on one or two occasions, even if he did that, of which there is no precise evidence. Indeed, I am not at all sure that it could not be proved that Churchill was not a member of the Hell Fire Club at all ;[1] and if this were so, his inclusion in this particular part of my work could not be justified. However, there is no gainsaying the fact that as a rake and a profligate he has a perfect right to be included somewhere in the volume, while as a friend of Wilkes this is certainly the most appropriate point at which to introduce him.

The friendship with Wilkes had important results. Churchill became identified with the political as well as the social interests of the popular idol, and he entered into a sort of offensive and defensive alliance with him which has perhaps

[1] His name, however, is included in the list of members, and we can only go by that.

done as much to injure his reputation as have any of his own shortcomings. What share he had exactly in *The North Briton* is not quite clear. We know that Kearsley the printer stated in examination that it was the poet who received the profits arising from its sale, but this was no doubt through some arrangement with Wilkes in order to get over some technical difficulty. But he was certainly so closely identified with the publication as to be one of those whom the Government messengers were instructed to arrest.[1] Once, indeed, he was nearly publishing apparently in prose form his *Prophecy of Famine* in its pages, but changed his mind and issued that work in a more congenial poetic dress. One thing is clear: Churchill threw himself heart and soul into Wilkes's political and personal quarrels, but to use Forster's words: "Even in these, if we trouble ourselves to look for it, we find a public principle very often implied. The men who had shared with Wilkes in the obscene and filthy indulgences of Medmenham Abbey were the same who, after crawling to the favourite's feet, had turned upon their old associate with disgusting pretences of indignation at his immorality. If in any circumstances Satire could be forgiven for approaching to Malignity it would be in the assailment of such men as these. The Roman senators who met to decide the fate

[1] The way he succeeded, through the readiness of Wilkes and himself, in evading this has been recorded in an earlier chapter.

of turbots were not more worthy of the wrath of Juvenal."

Very ardently did Churchill take up the cudgels in defence of his friend, but he laid about him in other directions too; and in his attack on Dr. Johnson (whom he calls Pomposo) for his credulity concerning the Cock Lane Ghost he shows his ability in drawing character even amid the rather arid pages of the poem—*The Ghost*—in which he launched this particular satire.

But it was in *The Prophecy of Famine*,[1] of which Wilkes remarked "that he was sure it would take, as it was at once personal, poetical and political," that he did special yeoman's service to Wilkes's struggle with the Bute Ministry by those onslaughts on the Scottish nation, against which he seems to have had as much animosity and rancour as his ally. In other ways than in his verse he was fond of exhibiting this: and there is a story of his dressing his younger son in the garb of a little Highlander and taking him everywhere. One day the boy was asked why he was thus apparelled, when he naively replied, "Sir, my father hates the Scotch and does it to plague them."

The *Prophecy of Famine* was Churchill's first excursion into what may be called political-poetical

[1] Referring to Churchill's line in *The Prophecy of Famine*—

"Far as the eye could reach no tree was seen,"

Mr. Jamieson remarked: "Faith, I wish I had as many Churchills to hang upon them as there's trees." *Boswelliana*, N. 240.

satire. The main points which actuated Wilkes may not have been so acutely felt by the poet, but he was a man of violent antipathies, and his dislike of Lord Bute's countrymen was quite enough to sharpen his wits in his covert attacks on Lord Bute himself. With Wilkes it appears to have been the other way about. This poem was published in the January of 1763; six months later it was followed by a more personal piece of invective, the *Epistle to William Hogarth.* Here he attacked, not a nation or a system of policy, but a man, and there is no doubt that the last years of the great pictorial satirist of the age were embittered by the attacks of his great poetical counterpart. Yet Hogarth had really brought it on himself. In September 1762 he had published a print entitled *The Times* which had called forth a severe condemnation in *The North Briton.* Smarting under this criticism, Hogarth retorted by producing his famous caricature of Wilkes; and it was at this juncture that Churchill entered the arena with his *Epistle.* But the painter was not the man to submit to such literary brow-beating; and just as he had caricatured Wilkes so he now did his new assailant, and a print of Churchill in the likeness of a bear duly appeared, with the following inscription attached: *The Bruiser, C. Churchill (once the Rev.) in the Character of a Russian Hercules, regaling himself after having killed the monster Caricatura, that so severely galled*

his virtuous friend, the heaven-born Wilkes. It was altogether an unfortunate example of the pot calling the kettle black. Hogarth had been a friend of Wilkes, he had been a guest at Medmenham, and although he had no special reason for respecting him he might have respected the laws of hospitality. If he was affected by Churchill's counter-thrust he had really begun the war himself. Garrick speaks of the satire as " the most bloody performance that has been published in my time," and there is little doubt that Churchill had the last word in the satiric combat.

In the inscription on Hogarth's print, Churchill, it will be observed, is described as " late the Rev." The fact is that before the appearance of the plate (July 1763) Churchill's conduct had become so loose, and the places he frequented and those he associated with were so notorious, that the good people of St. John's parish not unnaturally took alarm. They had been long-suffering, but the matter became too flagrant for further forbearance, and although he wrote a letter of resignation on January 3rd, 1763, there is every reason to suppose that it only anticipated dismissal. He was also about to take a step which would in any event have made a severance of his relations with the Church inevitable, and so we find him at last once more free from what had been from the first an unsuitable and repugnant occupation.

CHAPTER VI

CHARLES CHURCHILL (*Continued*)

THAT Churchill's connection with the Church had come to an end none too soon may be gauged by what we already know of his extremely unclerical conduct. The man who had come to consort with all kinds of rakes, who on one occasion while conducting a funeral in the Horseferry burial ground threw off his surplice and administered a sound hiding to a bystander who had seen him at his orgies the night before and jeered at him for his change of character, was hardly one whom even the compliant parishioners of St. John's, putting up with much on account of his father's honoured memory, could tolerate indefinitely. Added to this, Churchill was at this time, as I have said, taking a step which would in any case have settled the matter.

He appears to have made the acquaintance of a girl named Carr, whose father has been variously described as a stone-cutter and a respectable sculptor living in Westminster. Exactly when

this liaison began is not quite clear, but we know that during the period when he was associated with *The North Briton* (1763) he was lodging at a Mr. Carr's[1] at Vauxhall, and there can be no doubt that his landlord was the father of the girl he seduced. Whether he took up his residence here with the intention of ruining the girl, or whether he first made her acquaintance after he had become a lodger, is a question that cannot be answered, although if it could it would have a relative bearing on his moral character, as would the knowledge whether he was the tempter or the tempted. What we do know is that the connection, to use the words of one of his biographers, "gave him more emotion and anxiety than any other incident of his life." What is perhaps the fairest account of the incident is given us by Southey.[2] "He became intimate with the daughter of a tradesman in Westminster," says the writer, "seduced her, and prevailed on her to quit her father's house and live with him. But his moral sense had not been thoroughly depraved; a fortnight had not elapsed before both parties were struck with sincere compunction, and through the intercession of a true friend at their entreaty the unhappy penitent was received by her father. It is said she would have proved worthy of this

[1] At one time he had lodgings in Parliament Street; as we know, he was visited there by Wilkes.

[2] *Life of Cowper.*

parental forgiveness if an elder sister had not by continual taunts and reproaches rendered her life so miserable that in absolute despair she threw herself upon Churchill for protection." Walpole, who delighted in gossip of this kind, writes to Lord Hertford on November 18th, 1763, and puts the matter thus: "I forgot to tell you and you may wonder at hearing nothing of the Reverend Mr. Charles Pylades while Mr. John Orestes is making such a figure: but Dr. Pylades the poet has forsaken his consort and the Muses, and is gone off with a stone-cutter's daughter. If he should come and offer himself to you for Chaplain to the Embassy . . ."[1] This seems to indicate that Churchill had taken Miss Carr to the Continent, and the 'fortnight' mentioned by Southey may well have marked the length of the trip abroad.

Although Walpole speaks of Churchill's forsaking the Muses, this was but a *façon de parler*, for as a matter of fact he was at this time at work on a poem which he called *The Conference*. This appeared in November 1763, and in it he attempts to distinguish between his public and his private character, and while confessing remorse for his frailties upholds the integrity of his political attitude. The former, it may be said at once, was no more marked than the latter, and with all his faults Churchill can be exculpated from those

[1] Lord Hertford had recently been appointed Ambassador at Paris.

charges of venality which have been brought with reason against some other poets whose private characters have suffered no reproach. Forster regards *The Conference* as one of Churchill's masterpieces, and if to-day it is regarded with less enthusiasm, it has a special interest as being largely personal and as embodying his *apologia*.

In the summer of this year he took Miss Carr to Wales, and it was while staying at Monmouth that he made those observations on the inhabitants which he incorporated in another poem, *Gotham*, a rather disjointed performance in which may, however, be found many effective touches and even exquisite lines. The first part appeared in February 1764, and it had been preceded by *The Author*, for which, together with *The Duellist*, inspired by Wilkes's encounter with Martin, Churchill received £450—a sum which proves what an opinion the bookseller had of the selling quality of his wares. "*The Author*," says Tooke, "was considered as the most agreeable and unexceptional of Churchill's poems, both as regarded the tendency of the subject and the execution, the interests of genius and learning being cordially espoused and powerfully supported, while the contempt of professed ignorance and the shallowness of pretenders to science were justly exposed and lashed by the blameless rod of general satire."

This poem had been so long advertised and expected by the public before its actual appearance

in December 1763, that Colman produced the following lines about it and its writer :

" But where is this Author was promised so long
From Churchill, that giant so tall and so strong ?
' He's sick, Sir,' cries one ; ' he's burnt out,' cries another,
And the high flame of genius sinks down into smother :
Like the ghost of Cock Lane he has frighten'd us all,
And knock'd us and scratch'd us the great and the small ;
But now of his spirit no more we're afraid,
For Parson and Fanny together are laid."

On his return from his Welsh jaunt,[1] Churchill learned that his friend Robert Lloyd had become a prisoner in the Fleet, and with characteristic energy he did all he could to help him, and showed by his sympathy the warmth of his affection for his old school-fellow. He immediately visited him, provided him with a servant at his own expense, allowed him a guinea a week for his better subsistence, and bestirred himself to set on foot a subscription by which he hoped to extricate his friend from his unfortunate predicament. Unfortunately, Churchill was about the only friend of Lloyd's who really did do anything for him ; and while others who were under obligations to the prisoner confined themselves to expressions of sympathy, he alone put his hand in his pocket and otherwise demeaned himself actively in assisting the victim of bad fortune. Churchill no doubt remembered what Lloyd's father had done for himself, and he proved himself not ungrateful or

[1] He had also been to Oxford with Colman and Bonnell Thornton.

oblivious. Such an incident as this deserves record when the poet's shortcomings are generally what are chiefly remembered against him; and it may be matched by another which is given at length in *Chrysal*, but which it will here be sufficient to set down in Forster's summary of that rather lengthy and wordy account.

"Whilst Churchill was one night 'staggering' home after a supper in which spirited wit and liveliness of conversation as well as rectitude and sublimity of sentiment had gilded gross debauchery, a girl of the street addressed him. Her figure was elegant and her features regular; but want had sicklied o'er her beauty, and all the horrors of despair gloomed through the languid smile she forced when she addressed him. The sigh of distress, which never struck his ear without affecting his heart, came with double force from such an object. He viewed her with silent compassion for some moments, and reaching her a piece of gold bade her go home and shelter herself from the inclemencies of the night at so untimely an hour. Her surprise and joy at this unexpected charity overpowered her. She dropped upon her knees in the wet and dirt of the street, and raising her hands and eyes towards heaven remained in that posture for some moments, unable to give utterance to the gratitude that filled her heart. Churchill raised her tenderly, and as he would have pressed some instant refreshment upon her, she spoke of her mother,

her father, and her infant brother perishing of want in the garret she had left. 'Good God!' he exclaimed, 'I'll go with you directly! But stop. Let us first procure nourishment from some of the houses kept open at this late hour for a very different purpose. Come with me, we have no time to lose.' With this he took her to a tavern, loaded her with as much of the best as she could carry, and putting two bottles of wine in his own pocket, walked with her to her miserable home. There, with what pains he could, he assuaged the misery, more appalling than he fancied possible, passed the whole night in offices of the good Samaritan, nor changed his dress next morning till he had procured them a new and better lodging and provided for their future comfort; when, repressing as he could their prayers and blessings, he took leave. How the recording angel sets down such scenes and enters up the debtor and creditor account of such a man my Uncle Toby has written."[1]

Had this incident been known to the Beefsteak Club it might, one imagines, have caused its members to think twice before they 'expelled' Churchill. It is said that he was introduced on the nomination of Wilkes, but that his conduct with regard to Miss Carr so disgusted the fraternity as to cause his expulsion. One can hardly believe that in the eighteenth century, in the days of

[1] *Biographical Essays*: *Churchill*, by John Forster.

Sandwich and Lord March, of Dashwood and Wilkes himself, such an offence could have been even a contributory cause to such drastic action. In the list of the club's members [1] Churchill's name does not appear, and I doubt whether he was anything but an occasional guest. It is unbelievable that the 'Sublime Society' could thus collectively, as it were, have set itself up as a *censor morum* and have strained at this gnat while swallowing whole droves of camels.

We have already seen in the preceding chapters on Wilkes the course of events which led to his arrest and imprisonment, and there is no need to recapitulate the circumstances connected with No. 45 of *The North Briton* and the notorious *Essay on Woman*; although Churchill, as the friend and coadjutor of *The Patriot*, was for much in the former publication. That he in common with Wilkes himself never supposed that the *Essay*, which had been privately printed in an exceedingly limited edition, could be made a ground for accusation, is proved by his reply to the printer, who had hinted his suspicions and fears: "For anything the people in power could do they might be damned," he is credited with exclaiming. But neither he nor Wilkes had reckoned with spies and informers or actual theft, much less that their once boon companion Sandwich would rise in the

[1] See *The Life and Death of the Sublime Society of Beef-steaks*, by Bro. Walter Arnold, 1871.

House of Lords and play the horrified preserver of public morals.

Wilkes, as we have seen, was driven out of England, and there seems to have been a design that Churchill should join him abroad; but Churchill decided not to do so and remained at home, producing satire after satire with a sort of feverish activity that might well have seemed to indicate that he knew there was not destined to be much more of life allowed him for completing his self-allotted tasks. "I don't know," writes Horace Walpole at this juncture, "whether this man's fame has extended to Florence, but you may judge of the noise he makes in this part of the world by the following trait, which is a pretty instance of that good breeding on which the French pique themselves. My sister and Mr. Churchill are in France. A Frenchman asked him if he was Churchill *le fameux poète*? 'Non.' 'Ma foi, Monsieur, tant pis pour vous!'" Poor Horace, what a fool he was in some directions—and what a snob! However, as Forster, telling the story, adds, "the world takes note of only one Charles Churchill," although his namesake was the son of a general and the son-in-law of an earl.

It was during this period that Churchill lived for a time at Richmond and afterwards on Acton Common, in which rural centres he seems to have hoped both to repair a constitution gravely affected by dissipation, and by regular work to enjoy a

dignified and rational way of life. He possessed a house at Acton, furnished, we are told, with extreme elegance, to have " kept his post-chaise, saddle horses, and pointers," and to have " fished, fowled, hunted, coursed, and lived in an independent easy manner." He had become famous, and even hostile critics like Johnson and Walpole (how curious to find these two in the same camp !) were forced to confess that the man had something in him. Horace tells us how the world of London was ' transported ' by Churchill's verse, and the ponderous doctor confessed that he had a better opinion of him than was formerly the case, because he had shown more ' fertility ' than he had expected : " To be sure, he is a tree that cannot produce good fruit, he only bears crabs. But, Sir, a tree that produces a great many crabs is better than a tree which produces only a few."

In his anxiety to procure money Churchill has been accused of undue greediness for gain, but he had many dependent on him : his wife, his sons, his mistress, and a host of clamorous friends, and he gave royally.

" Spendthrift alike of money and of wit "

as Cowper, who greatly admired him, terming him " Churchill, the great Churchill," has written in his *Table Talk*.

About this time Lord Sandwich—the Jemmy Twitcher of the wits and caricaturists, the whilom member of the Hell Fire Club, later the self-

appointed guardian of public morals and the denouncer of Wilkes—became a candidate for the post of High Steward of Cambridge University. It is obvious that the mere suggestion of such a man as the official head of an institution whose business it was to inculcate piety and learning in the youth of the period, formed an excellent peg on which to hang satire's garment, and Churchill took the occasion by the hand. He produced his *Candidate,* in which occurs that pen-portrait of Sandwich which traces his career :

> " From his youth upwards to the present day,
> When vices more than years have marked him grey,

and leaves the

> " Lothario, on that stock which nature gives,
> Without a rival . . . although March [1] yet lives.

Lord Bute thought that *The Candidate* was the severest and best of all Churchill's satires, and this praise has been echoed by others even better able to judge of its merits. The character of Sandwich as drawn by the author cannot compare with Dryden's famous picture of the Duke of Buckingham ; but it has extraordinary force of invective, and may be placed beside the better known production as showing how something less subtle can become almost as effective by the mere enumeration of follies and vices.

Two poems followed *The Candidate* within the same year, one *The Farewell*—a dialogue in verse

[1] The notorious Lord March, afterwards known as " Old Q."

not of any special merit but, as usual with Churchill, containing here and there strong lines and much pregnant sense, and *The Times,* in which he attempts to castigate in the manner of Juvenal the depravities existing in various countries. As in all such generalisations, there is here the tendency to attribute to a nation what was only true of a small and vitiated circle. *The Times* is an unpleasant poem on an unpleasant subject; its author, after surveying immorality at home, ranges the Continent and finds it equally prominent in most countries, until, reading these virulent lines, we feel inclined to exclaim: "Be there no honest men, Hal?" This tendency to confound the particular with the general is the mistake of most satirists; but no one I can think of has carried it to greater lengths than Churchill—especially the Churchill of *The Times.*

The poet's literary activity at this, the ultimate period of his career, was astounding, and quickly following on these two poems came from his pen one on *Independance,* a subject in which he had always shown by his own attitude towards life a marked predilection. As it turned out, it was the last of his productions to be published during his lifetime. It appeared at the end of September 1764, and shows little falling off in that power of conception and vigour of treatment which had characterised so much of his earlier work. There is, for instance, a very fine passage on the emptiness

of worldly titles. But it is chiefly interesting to us here (concerned as we are rather with the poet himself than with a critical estimate of his works) because it contains a striking pen-portrait of the author, a passage which should properly find a place in these pages and which I therefore quote :

" Broad were his shoulders, and from blade to blade,
A H—— might at full length have laid ;
Vast were his bones, his muscles twisted, strong,
His face was short, but broader than 'twas long ;
His features, though by nature they were large,
Contentment had contrived to overcharge
And bury meaning, save that we might spy
Sense lowering on the pent-house of his eye ;
His arms were two twin oaks, his legs so stout,
That they might bear a mansion-house about,
Nor were they, look but at his body there,
Design'd by fate a much less weight to bear.
O'er a brown cassock, which had once been black,
Which hung in tatters on his brawny back,
A sight most strange and awkward to behold,
He threw a covering of blue and gold.
Just at that time of life when man by rule
The fop laid down, takes up the graver fool,
He started up a fop, and fond of show,
Look'd like another Hercules turn'd beau.
A subject, met with only now and then,
Much fitter for the pencil than the pen ;
Hogarth would draw him (Envy must allow)
E'en to the life, was Hogarth living now." [1]

Here is indeed ' The Bruiser '—drawn by his own hand, with nothing extenuated. The inveterate satirist had at last turned on himself.

[1] As a matter of fact Hogarth was actually alive. He died on October 26th, just nine days before Churchill himself.

Young as he still was, Churchill seems to have had one of those curious premonitions of his quickly approaching death which are no doubt frequently present to everyone without being borne out by events, but which, when they are, take on a kind of prophetic character. He had written still another poem called *The Journey*, and its last line was:

"I on my journey all alone proceed."

It had a double significance, for he appears to have suddenly experienced a desire to see his friend Wilkes, then at Boulogne, and with a line to his brother: "Dear Jack, adieu! C. C." he set out on October 22nd, 1764, on what was indeed destined to be his last earthly journey. What happened at Boulogne is not recorded, until about a week later, to be precise on the 29th, he was seized by a fever which seems to have entirely baffled the doctors who were called in. As a matter of fact, he had not set out on his journey alone, as he was accompanied by two friends, Gay and Cotes. Tooke tells us that the former had a great belief in Dr. James's powder, at that time a panacea for all earthly ills. The doctors raised no objection to his administering this remedy, although they appear to have had little faith in its efficacy, in Churchill's case at any rate. They recognised, it is probable, that he was a doomed man; certainly they suggested his making a will, and he sat up in bed and dictated

it, leaving his wife an annuity of £60, an annuity of £50 to Miss Carr, and subject to these and a few trifling legacies (as was the custom then, he left 'mourning rings' to Lord and Lady Temple, Wilkes, Cotes, Walsh and the Duke of Grafton), the rest of his property to his two sons. He desired his "dear friend John Wilkes to collect and publish his works, with the remarks and explanations he has prepared, and any others he thinks proper to make." Having done this, and perhaps not even then realising his real condition, he expressed a particular wish to be carried back to England. Forster says that it was the imprudent measures taken by his friends to comply with this desire that hastened the end, which came on November 4th in a house, as is supposed,[1] in the Rue Neuve Chaussée.

The deaths of men who have made a mark in the world are generally attended by contradictory statements, and that of Churchill was no exception. The actor Davies, for instance, states that his last words were: "What a fool I have been!"—a statement emphatically denied by Wilkes. That too late he may have realised the mistake he had made in desiring to be moved at such a crisis, and may have uttered the words in that sense, is not improbable, but it was in contradiction to his whole attitude towards life to have used this expression in the sense which Davies obviously attributed to it.

[1] By Austin Dobson.

Again, there is no reason for believing that he died in consequence of a drunken debauch, as Bishop Warburton was not above stating and Walpole repeating. " Churchill the poet is dead," writes the latter to Mann on November 15th, " to the great joy of the ministry and the Scotch, and to the grief of a very few indeed, I believe. . . . He died of a drunken debauch *at Calais* on a visit to his friend Wilkes."

Even were there few who mourned Churchill's death, two may be said to have died of it: his friend Robert Lloyd, and his sister who was engaged to Lloyd. " The poet had asked that none should mourn for him, and here were two broken hearts offered up at his grave," says Forster, who adds: " other silent and bitter sorrows were also there." The poet's body was brought to Dover and there buried in the church of St. Martin, the stone that covered his grave being inscribed with one of his own lines:

" Life to the last enjoy'd, here Churchill lies."

The few effects which he left, books, pictures, and furniture, were sold for very high prices—a steel pen, perhaps the pen from which had flowed so many excellent lines as well as such bitter satire and pointed invective, realised £5. So Churchill must have had his hero-worshippers as well as his enemies and admirers.

To-day Churchill is practically forgotten save by the few who study English poetry or are in-

terested in the life of the eighteenth century. It can thus hardly be said that he has any longer either partisans or detractors. In his lifetime, however, he was one of the most marked, as he was in a way one of the most remarkable, men in London. Some of his contemporaries saw nothing in his achievement, like Dr. Johnson ; others, like Walpole, were unable to see anything and veered about according as the wind of popular opinion blew them. Others regarded him as a political pamphleteer in verse, and judged him from their various standpoints of political opinion. Yet others were horrified that one who had been a clergyman, and indeed was still one for a considerable time after he had adventured into verse, should act as he did and consort with such men as he delighted in doing. Wilkes found in him a willing and splendid coadjutor, and Churchill had to bear much of the obloquy with which his friend was assailed.

Looking back at Churchill's character from the calmer standpoint of to-day, we must acknowledge that his career was irregular and reprehensible in many of its features. He was a rake at heart and in practice, and a rake all the more marked because he had been forced into a profession which should be (but not always is, alas !) the negation of such a character. It is arguable, indeed, that all his failings sprang originally from the ill-considered step which landed him in holy orders. Anxious to follow in the steps on which his father had set

his heart, he was too affectionate, or too weak (different people will hold either opinion) to withstand the paternal wishes, and he thus came before the world garbed in a dress which was both inappropriate and repugnant to him. Bursting through this integument his natural inclinations for pleasure came crowding on a character neither strong enough nor indeed willing to do them battle ; and the man who should have been looking after his flock was to be found frequenting the playhouses and less reputable haunts, and enrolling himself with that band of reprobates whose orgies have sullied their names as they desecrated the peaceful rurality of Medmenham.

But like so many rakes Churchill had his good points, and the extract from *Chrysal* which I have given in Forster's paraphrase shows that if he could not be an adequate parish priest he could on occasion be something better—a good Samaritan. He did not often make close friends, but when he did he proved himself the very genius of Friendship, as may be seen by his conduct to John Wilkes and Robert Lloyd. Byron (with whom—especially in that fatal facility of output—he has certain features in common) called him once "the comet of a season."[1] I think students of his work will agree that this is not quite a fair implication. Satire (and satire was his chief stock-in-trade) always largely depends for its effect on an intimate

[1] See *Churchill's Grave*, by Byron.

knowledge of the state of affairs or the character of the individual which has actuated it. All the old quarrels, all the personalities which are adumbrated in Churchill's verse, are for the majority of us things done long ago, and ill done. We can only regard them academically, and so the verse which reprehends them or laughs at them seems to us often as jejune as it seems pointless. Isolated pieces of pre-eminent achievement in this direction live because what they say of certain people or particular events or special states of life are as true in their general application to all kinds of people, all kinds of events, be their period what it may. But judged thus, there will be found passages in Churchill as effective almost as in Dryden, invective as pointed as Junius or Macaulay[1] has left us. Churchill, *mutatis mutandis*, may, I think, be regarded as the Juvenal of the Georgian era; for he lashed the crimes and follies of his time, the shortcomings and excesses of individual rakes, political and social, with as certain and determined a rod; the fact that he himself was a rake and deserved much of the castigation he administered to others was realised by no one more than by the man who on so many occasions acknowledged his faults and did something by his sympathy with the oppressed and his charity to the needy to atone for it. John Forster wrote what is probably the best account of Churchill

[1] I refer to the tremendous denunciation of Barère.

which we have, in that essay in which he falls foul of the poet's editor, W. Tooke, with the virulence and something of the unfairness of Macaulay. Among those books which he left to the nation is a copy of Churchill's poems in which may be read these words, written in the margin of one of the volumes: "Churchill had noble and sterling qualities, both as a man and as a poet. As a man —sympathy with the poor and oppressed, and fidelity and tenderness to his friends. As a poet —a rare mixture of the natural and impulsive with the artificial, and a feeling for nature and truth in general." In this appreciation we may fitly forget the author's many lapses from rectitude and remember only his enduring qualities of greatness, and we may appropriately add to it this amplification from the same writer on Churchill's use of the satiric vein:

"It is not by the indifferent qualities in his works that Charles Churchill should be judged, and, as he has too frequently been, condemned. Judge him at his best, judge him by the men whom he followed in this kind of composition, and his claim to the respectful and enduring attention of the students of English poetry and literature becomes manifest. Of the gross indecencies of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams he has none. He never in any one instance, whether to fawn upon power or to trample upon weakness, wrote licentious lampoons. There was not a form

of mean pretence or servile assumption which he did not denounce. Low, pimping politics he abhorred ; and that their vile abettors, to whose exposure his works are so incessantly devoted, have not carried him into utter oblivion with themselves sufficiently argues for the sound morality and permanent truth expressed in his manly verse. He indulged too much in personal invective, as we have said, and invective is too apt to pick up for instant use against its adversaries the first heavy stone that lies by the wayside, without regard to its form or fitness."

CHAPTER VII

PAUL WHITEHEAD

THE names of Paul Whitehead and Robert Lloyd have occurred not infrequently in the foregoing chapters on Wilkes and Churchill. All four were more or less intimately associated, all were literary men, all were members of the Hell Fire Club, for which last reason alone their inclusion in this volume is justified. But besides this, all were rakes, and although the public life of one and the poetical excellence of another have to some extent mitigated their failings, while pleas for exculpation can be advanced on behalf of the other two, yet none of their careers can be said by the widest extension of charitable forbearance to be a model *virginibus puerisque*. Whitehead was the henchman of Sir Francis Dashwood, Lloyd the intimate associate of Charles Churchill, and their characters partake not a little of the same complexion as those of the more notorious men with whom they are linked.

But just as they were not so outstanding in the roll of fame, so they are not so prominent in the

rôle of rakes, and although Whitehead's close connection with the doings of Medmenham would in any case have justified his inclusion, that of Robert Lloyd is based on his friendship with Churchill, with whom in his earlier years he was identified in many a riotous orgy, but who was one of those weak amiable creatures whose vices are largely the result of friendly compliance rather than of inherent depravity. Churchill, Whitehead and Lloyd were the poets of the Medmenham set—and poets are admittedly allowed a licence not conceded to less gifted men. For this reason we may, I think, be " to their failings a little kind," especially when we remember certain qualities of greatness inherent in the first, and a certain charm of character which was present in the other two. As we have seen, Churchill possessed extraordinary powers of mind, and was a person of importance in his day ; Whitehead and Lloyd never made anything like the name of the author of *The Rosciad*, but they were anything but negligible during their lifetime ; and if now they are forgotten, save by special students of their age, it is because in the vast and splendid forest of British verse they are but saplings overshadowed by the trunks and branches of more wide-spreading giants.

For some reason which is not now very clear Paul Whitehead became the constant butt of Churchill, and in *The Conference*, *The Candidate* and *Independence* he is found gibbeted by his

whilom associate of the Hell Fire Club in a gamut of vituperation, ranging from the "aged Paul" of one poem to the "kept bard" and "disgrace of mankind" of the others. But Churchill laid about him with a hand that spared neither friend nor foe, and although Whitehead had many failings, was but an indifferent poet, and the very reverse of a saintly liver, yet it is well to take with the proverbial amount of salt what the inveterate satirist says about him. He was a man who was obliged to live by his wits, and if he was as ready to "take a place" as James Ralph was to "change his pen,"[1] he had more excuse for doing so than had many a rich and titled man who was guilty of the same tergiversation, and I can find nothing in the record of his life which merited his being branded as the "disgrace of mankind" any more than Churchill himself, or, for the matter of that, the bulk of the Hell Fire Club, deserved such an accusation.

So little is now remembered about Paul Whitehead, who must, of course, not be confounded with his namesake the poet laureate,[2] that apart from his rakeish propensities one may be forgiven for saying something to save his name from that silent sentence of forgetfulness which time passes

[1] See *The Conference*, line 260.

[2] William Whitehead, an equally forgotten worthy, born in 1715 and died in 1785, who succeeded Colley Cibber in the post, and produced the tragedies of *A Roman Father* and *Creusa*, and a comedy *A School for Lovers*, inter multa alia.

on mediocrity. Paul Whitehead, the youngest son of Edmund Whitehead, a prosperous tailor, was born in his father's house in Castle Yard (now Furnival Street), running from Holborn to Cursitor Street, on January 25th, 1710.[1] We know nothing of his early years except that he was sent to school at Hitchin, whence he was taken to be bound apprentice to a mercer in the City. The child is father to the man, as we have poetic authority for stating ; and it is not therefore to be wondered at that the child (for he could have been little more—certainly legally he was not) Paul found the counter as uncongenial as others, never destined to write poems or consort with men of fashion and standing, have found it. Disagreements arose, and one can imagine the worthy mercer telling the worthy tailor that the lad would never be good for anything because he did not happen to be good for trade. The biographies of many illustrious men have begun in this fashion, and it is rather a solemn thought how much the world may have lost by the insistence of parents on their sons following inappropriate callings ; as we have seen, Churchill's life was gravely affected by his unwillingness to run counter (I intend no paranomasia) to his father's wishes. Young Paul, however, seems to have been made of sterner stuff ; and we are told, rather surprisingly, that he took chambers in the

[1] So it is given on the memorial stone on which Garrick's lines are inscribed.

Temple as a student. What, I imagine, happened was that he persuaded his father to forfeit his apprentice money, or the mercer to annul his articles, and then entered himself at the Bar. From subsequent events it would seem that the tailor was not in quite the low station some have supposed, and it seems equally probable that he was of some financial position, and having let his son have his own way—a way prepared no doubt by the writing of stanzas when he should have been casting up accounts—he passes from our ken. We do not know even if he departed this life a disappointed man, or if he lived to see his refractory offspring become something of a personage.

The habits of the law student are at least indicated by the fact that not long after taking up his residence in chambers he became so intimate with Charles Fleetwood, the theatrical manager and the " lazy and reckless patentee of Drury Lane,"[1] that he backed a bill for him. Apparently no one does this without fatal effects—it is so in novels ; it is equally so in actual life ; and that backing of a bill obviously indicates disaster. The bill will not be met ; in effect Fleetwood did not meet the bill ; and Paul, like a greater namesake, was if not in prisons oft at least in one for a considerable time in consequence. He was arrested for a debt not his own and which he could not pay, and

[1] Doran's *Annals of the Stage*. Whitehead became liable for £3,000.

he was incontinently haled off to the Fleet—under that dear old law which ordained that if a man owed money the means of making money to pay the debt was to be effectually taken from him.

There appear to have been three diversions possible to the prisoners in the Fleet—drinking, playing racquets, and writing poetry. The amount of paper that must have been used up for the last amusement within 'the rules' must have been prodigious. Paul joined the band of those who learnt in sorrow what they taught in song; but his songs were political rather than personal, and it is to this period of his career that are traced many of those squibs and lampoons directed against the ministry. I don't know if he made anything by these lucubrations. The Fleet was a forcing house for such things, and politicians were not above seeking the literary aid in such directions of those who languished within its walls.

Paul's first published effort of any length was a satire entitled *The State Dunces*, written in heroic couplets and brought out in 1733. It was inscribed to Pope, the god of most young poets' idolatry at that time, and it reproduces more successfully than many such imitations the style of 'the wicked wasp of Twitnam.' The poem was one of those personal ones which had such a vogue in the days when the enemies of Sir Robert took care to enlist on their side so many venal pens, a procedure to which the great minister himself

seldom condescended to resort. Walpole appears in the satire as Appius, and Francis Hare, Bishop of Chichester, and James Ralph, the Whig historian and pamphleteer, are both gibbeted in its lines. Dodsley gave Paul ten guineas for the poem, a fact memorable for the well-known remark of Johnson concerning his *London*, for which Dodsley at a subsequent period agreed to pay the same amount: "I might," remarked Johnson to Boswell, "perhaps have accepted of less, but that Paul Whitehead had a little before got ten guineas for a poem, and I would not take less than Paul Whitehead."

What happened in the interval between the publication of *The State Dunces* and the year 1735 is somewhat of a mystery. One imagines that Paul must at least have got released; perhaps his father (if still living) came to his aid, or some of the political friends who may have thought him worth rescuing as a help to their intrigues may have assisted him; or his father may have died and left him money. It is idle speculating. But it is a rather remarkable fact that the young man of twenty-five, the son of a tailor, and whose time had lately been passed in a State prison, should have married, and not only married, but should have been able to ally himself with a young lady of birth and position. But so it was, and sometime during 1735 he became the husband of Ann, daughter of Sir Swinnerton Dyer of Spains Hall, Essex, who brought him a

fortune of £10,000. Here then we have Paul in a haven of refuge at an early age ; but it would have been interesting to know how he secured it, how he, without much to recommend him, except his own *beaux yeux*, was lucky enough to marry what was for those days a considerable fortune. We are indeed told that the young lady was homely in her person and weak in her intellect ; so perhaps her parents were glad enough to be rid of her to anyone! It should be added in fairness to Paul, who has otherwise endured much obloquy, that he is said always to have treated her with respect and even tenderness.

For a time he appears to have led a life of leisure, certainly nothing of moment came from his pen for some years after his marriage ; but in 1739 Dodsley published for him another satirical poem called *Manners*.[1] Boswell regarded this work as a brilliant and pointed satire, but Johnson thought very differently of it. Indeed, the great man was, in the opinion of his biographer, as uniformly unfair to the merits of Paul as was Churchill, who once, it will be remembered, wrote :

> " May I (can worse disgrace on Manhood fall ?)
> Be born a Whitehead, and baptized a Paul ! "

The poem [2] attracted much attention, and that

[1] The *D.N.B.* states that the MS. of this poem is in the British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 25277, pp. 117-20.

[2] There are many strong and effective lines in *Manners*, and had Whitehead persevered in this direction one cannot but think that he would have made a solid reputation as a satiric poet.

the ministry thought it worth while falling upon is proved by the fact that the author and publisher were both served with writs ordering them to answer for their libel. In his *Life of Pope* Johnson thus notices the occurrence : " Paul Whitehead, a small poet, was summoned before the Lords for a poem called *Manners*, together with Dodsley his publisher. Whitehead, who hung loose upon society, skulked and escaped, but Dodsley's shop and family made his appearance necessary. He was, however, soon dismissed, and the whole process was probably intended rather to intimidate Pope than to punish Whitehead." It is probable that Whitehead's escape was connived at. He had by this time become associated with many powerful friends, and it is from this period I think that we should date his first introduction to Sir Francis Dashwood, and his association with the Hell Fire Club ; certainly Boswell, in noticing what he thought Johnson's injustice to Paul's merits, adds, " but when it is considered that Paul Whitehead was a member of a riotous and profane club, we may account for Johnson's having a prejudice against him."

This association with Dashwood and his set has been described[1] as " the deepest degradation of Whitehead's life." Before actually becoming a

[1] By A. W. Ward in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. That writer thinks this association began later, about 1751, but Boswell speaks of it under date of 1738. Whitehead was elected a member of the Beefsteak Club on October 20th, 1744.

member of the Order of St. Francis he had known Dashwood politically, as it may be termed. He possessed a certain facility in turning out squibs and lampoons and such-like efforts, in which personalities of the most direct kind were levelled at ministers and their supporters, and as such he was welcomed by all who were in opposition and who hoped to be in power, and he was to become identified later with the Prince of whom that opposition made such effective use.

But we must for a moment turn our attention to the part he played at Medmenham—a part, if not outstanding, yet important enough to have resulted in his being to-day regarded as one of the props of that irregular and vicious fraternity. Indeed, he must have taken a very leading part in the organisation and conduct of the Hell Fire Club, for he combined the offices of secretary and steward and was obliged personally to attend to the duties, which were often of too delicate a character to be left to a subordinate. As a sort of hanger-on, too, to Dashwood he had his uses, and in Churchill's phrase:

> "A nation's reckoning, like an alehouse score,
> Which Paul, the aged,[1] chalks behind a door."

One visualises him as a man of an age to know better, pandering to the vices and boisterous

[1] Elsewhere Churchill calls him "Old Paul." Perhaps he possessed a more matured air than the rest of the Franciscans, but he was only 52 when the society was dissolved. He seemed old no doubt to Churchill, who was his junior by 21 years, and he was probably the oldest of the band.

exuberance of younger men, and for this reason, if for no other, his connection with the Medmenham orgies has a repulsiveness about it which, had he been less advanced in years, would not have struck us as so objectionable—if, indeed, any excuse can be forthcoming for such excesses. Paul was in fact a born parasite, who happened also to be something (Johnson would allow very little) of a poet, and the combination is somehow less attractive than had he been a mere brainless idler. And he was anything but an idler. He was, on the contrary, only too prolific in producing verse which has long since died, and political effusions whose value was merely ephemeral.

He had become a useful tool of the opposition Court which gathered round Prince Fritz at Leicester House and Clivedon, and at least two attempts to make political capital out of current events are associated with his name. They both occurred in 1741. The first took place on the birthday of Admiral Vernon, and is thus recorded by Walpole, writing to Mann on November 23rd :—" I believe I told you that Vernon's birthday passed quietly, but it was not designed to be pacific, for at twelve at night eight gentlemen, dressed like sailors and masked, went round Covent Garden with a drum, beating up for a volunteer mob ; but it did not take, and they retired to a great supper that was prepared for them at the Bedford Head, and ordered by Whitehead, the author of *Manners*."

The other circumstance has been perpetuated in a well-known print by Bertoist, entitled *Grand Procession of the Scald Miserable Masons.* This mock entertainment, in ridicule of the Freemasons' annual cavalcade from Brooke Street, Holborn, to Haberdashers' Hall, was organised by Paul and a doctor named Carey, surgeon to the Prince of Wales. The ribald show consisted of shoeblacks and chimneysweeps in carts drawn by asses, followed by a mourning coach to which were attached six different coloured horses, and attended by a large gathering of all sorts of ne'er-do-wells, some carrying poles on which emblematic trophies were hung, others bearing banners ; some crowned with fools' caps, others with horns attached to their heads, and such-like suggestive adornments. The City authorities sternly refused to permit the procession to pass through Temple Bar, but it waited there to salute the real masons, who were due to arrive at the same moment. The Prince, who possessed a greater sense of decency than his satellite, was furious at the incident, and promptly dismissed Carey from his post ; Whitehead, however, not holding any official position in the household, could not be reprimanded so effectively.[1]

Having thus liberated his soul, Paul turned his attention to other things ; and no doubt did political odd jobs for the egregious Bubb-Dodington, who had become a sort of patron to him, as well

[1] Horace Walpole to Mann.

as for other members of the opposition. He was always happy enough, we know, in intriguing with the enemies of Sir Robert Walpole against whom he seems to have had a sort of personal animosity, if we can go by his remark on seeing the great man leave the House after the fall of his ministry in 1742 : " Damn him, how well he looks ! " [1]

His next publication had, however, nothing to do with political fisticuffs, although it was concerned with fisticuffs of another kind ; for in 1744 he brought out *The Gymnasiad*, a perfectly harmless effusion on the most famous boxers of that period, and dedicated appropriately to John Broughton, one of the most renowned of British pugilists. It ridicules the prevalence of the ' art ' and the mania for such exhibitions—a mania which, however, it did little to abate, as the annals of the prize ring for at least another fifty years or more amply testify.

Another three years were to elapse before Paul again came into the public eye with a fresh poem, for it was not till 1747 that *Honour* appeared to tell England that Liberty was about to follow Virtue from its shores unless Stanhope, otherwise the 4th or great Earl of Chesterfield, then recently returned from his Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, should intervene to avert the disaster. The poem had no special merit, and was not in any way distinguished

[1] Hogarth produced a print of the circumstance which is vulgar without being witty.

from masses of the same kind of allegorical verse which at that time pleased one section of the public and amused the other. A prose work with which about this time Paul also appears to have had some connection was *The Apology* of that notorious and disreputable personage Teresia Constantia Phillips, which appeared in numbers, making finally three volumes, in 1748, and which he is said to have edited. It is stated on the title-page that the booksellers had been intimidated to stifle the work, and that in consequence the authoress was obliged to publish it herself—a sufficient indication of the personal and scandalous character of the book.

Meanwhile Paul was busy doing hack-work for his political friends and patrons, and the Westminster election of 1749 gave him further scope for his energies in this direction. Sir George Vandeput was the nominee of ' the Prince's friends,' as they were called, and for him Paul produced election bills and squibs and such-like aids to success—a success the candidate did not, however, achieve. He was also responsible for a pamphlet on behalf of the Hon. Alexander Murray, who had been sent to Newgate by the House of Commons for his share in the Westminster Petition of 1751.[1] In fact, he was at hand to produce anything of this kind that might be required, and may be said to have passed his working hours at least in a perpetual see-saw of poetry and polemics.

[1] See Walpole to Mann, Feb. 9th, 1751.

Meanwhile Prince Fritz died[1] from the effects of that unfortunate walk on a cold day at Kew, and his adherents were left, if not without a head (for poor Fritz could not boast of much in that respect) at least without a rallying point, and they had to do the best they could in transferring their allegiance to the head of the State against whose ministry they had been continually plotting. We shall see how one of them, Bubb-Dodington, who was no novice at such changes, succeeded in again turning his already much-turned coat. Paul was, however, for a number of years not so lucky, and he remained in Johnson's phrase, "loose upon society," occupied with his duties as secretary to the Hell Fire Club; turning Hogarth's rough draft of verses addressed to Dr. Hay, and occasioned by Sir Richard Grosvenor's refusal to buy his Sigismunda,[2] into what the painter called 'English'; in convivial gatherings with the Sublime Society of Beefsteaks in their room at the top of Covent Garden Theatre; and in producing, to his honour be it said, a pamphlet in defence of Admiral Byng, in which a defiant note seems to have anticipated anything but the sentence which was so shamefully passed on the victim, *pour encourager les autres*, as Voltaire phrased it.

[1] Paul wrote an *Epistle to Dr. Thompson* some years later (1751). This Thompson was a dissolute quack who had found fault with the Prince's doctors in their treatment of the case. Paul's justification of him is largely a matter of vituperation of the College of Physicians.

[2] See Austin Dobson's *Hogarth*.



PAUL WHITEHEAD

[*face p.* 152.]

At last his chance came. His friend and patron, the Sir Francis Dashwood of Medmenham notoriety, had succeeded through his mother to the peerage as Lord le Despencer, and in 1762 had been made Chancellor of the Exchequer. Whatever may be said of that extraordinary man, he was at least mindful of his friends; and Paul, who had been for so long his henchman, and had shared with him the many shameful secrets of the Franciscans, was rewarded with office—a subsidiary office certainly, but worth £800 a year, and with little to do—the Deputy Treasurership of the Chambers, as it was called.

Paul, after his marriage, could never be termed exactly a poor man; on the other hand, he was by no means wealthy. The accession of such an income made him, for those days and for his more or less moderate wants, a rich one. He possessed a small cottage at Twickenham, and this he was now able to enlarge and improve. This "neat villa in the style of a château," as it was termed—and the combination sounds horrific enough in all conscience—was on the north side of what was then called Twickenham Heath. In his *Epistle to Dr. Thompson*, referred to before, Paul thus figures himself in his rural abode:

> "Safe in the harbour of my Twick'nham bower
> From all the wrecks of State or storms of Power;
> No wreaths I court, no subsidies I claim,
> Too rich for want, too indolent for fame,
> . . . . . .

Health, rosy handmaid, at my Table waits,
And halcyon Peace broods watchful o'er my gates."

He tells us, too, of the prospect which his house enjoyed:

" Here Campbell's varied shades with wonder see
Like Heav'n's own Eden, stor'd with every tree ;
Each plant with plant in verdant glory vies,
High tow'ring pines, like Titans, scale the skies ;
And Lebanon's rich groves on Hounslow's desert rise."

Well, the simple satisfied soul of the first extract was, as I have said, not above claiming subsidies from the State, even if he no longer asked for wreaths from the critics. From one critic, indeed, he received anything but wreaths, unless the intertwined wreaths of fury and invective, serpentine as those round Medusa's head, which came from Churchill, can be so described. For it was at this time, when Paul had accepted a place from those whom erstwhile he spent his time in abusing, that Churchill held him up to ridicule with the contemptuous hand of the disappointed ally. However, with a good pension and what he at least thought a delightful abode (and, indeed, its situation if not its architecture left little to be desired), Paul could afford to treat with equanimity the lash of one who applied it indifferently to friends that had been and enemies that were ; and he settled down into those complacent advancing years in which acerbity is so often swallowed up in the mellowness of age.

One of his chief friends at Twickenham was Sir John Hawkins, who was, indeed, made a magistrate,

and he is said to have 'made one of the best,' through Paul's influence. Miss Hawkins has no little to say about the poet *en retraite*, and she defends him from those charges of immorality and looseness of life which have been brought against him. But it must be remembered that she only knew him when his passions were dulled and the reformation of the rake was fairly completed.

In appearance, she tells us, he resembled the portrait of the great King of Prussia—the Frederick II. of Carlyle's pathetic struggling. "He was living," she adds, "in a way that did honour to his feelings, or his sense of right, with the poor weak creature whom he had, I believe, really for the sake of her money, made his wife. She predeceased her husband by some years. She was so nearly idiotic that she would call off his attention in conversation to look at a cow, not as one of singular beauty, but in the words, 'Mr. Whitehead, there's a cow!' He took it most patiently, as he did all such trials of his temper, sweetened, perhaps, by a pretty villa and a handsome chariot which her fortune enabled him to enjoy."

Hawkins used to make efforts to get him to go to church; but he always refused, on the plea that he was not quite settled in his belief; but that he was not wholly insensible to religious feelings, Miss Hawkins shows by a remark he once made to her: "When I go into St. Paul's," he said, "I admire it as a very fine, grand, beautiful building; and when

I've contemplated its beauty, I come out ; but if I go into Westminster Abbey, damn me, I'm all devotion." Sir John Hawkins himself is not as enthusiastic over Paul as was his daughter ; describing his conversation, he says there was little to praise in it. " It was desultory, vociferous and profane," and he adds that his friend " had contracted a habit of swearing in his younger years which he retained till his latest ;" and, as we have seen, he could not make a reference to the Abbey without an expletive.

During his later years he seems almost entirely to have given up the use of his pen, and with the exception of a pamphlet on certain theatrical disputes connected with Covent Garden, which came out in 1768, he produced nothing, unless one counts some stray songs which he wrote for his friend Beard, the actor, and others. When Campbell was writing his account of Paul Whitehead for his *British Poets*, he gave as a specimen of his composition one of these—A Hunting Song—good and effective of its kind ; just as some of Paul's other verse was effective and far from bad.

At Twickenham the bard seems to have been respected and liked, and it is pleasant to learn that he was happy and successful in composing quarrels among his neighbours, and possessed the character of an amiable and kind-hearted man. Nor was it only at Twickenham that he had many friends, for apart from those of his earlier days—the members

of the Hell Fire Club—Wilkes and Lloyd, and Dashwood and Dodington, and the political acquaintances of his later years, he was on friendly terms with men like Hogarth and Hayman, and others who were his fellow members of the Beefsteak Club.

When the end came it found Paul in lodgings in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, where he died after a long illness, on December 30th, 1774. During his last days he had burnt all his papers; otherwise one might have had more information on many things—the doings of the Franciscans among them. He was buried in Teddington churchyard; but no stone marks the spot where his remains were laid. Indeed, not quite all his remains were laid there, for he had bequeathed his heart to his patron Lord le Despencer, together with £50 for a marble urn in which to deposit it. It was accordingly taken to West Wycombe, and placed in that curious mausoleum which Lord le Despencer had caused to be built there.[1]

In the life of Paul Whitehead which Captain Thompson wrote for the 1777 edition [2] of his works, an account is given of the ceremony which took place when the heart was carried to its home in the

[1] It is said that the heart is no longer there. Some visitor is supposed to have carried it away. Let us hope he did not eat it, as Frank Buckland ate that of Louis XIV.

[2] Collyer engraved the portrait which Gainsborough had painted of Paul, and which was prefixed to this volume. The volume is inscribed to Lord le Despencer.

le Despencer family tomb. By it we learn that a procession, formed of the officers and men of the Buckinghamshire Militia, with Lord le Despencer at their head, conveyed the relic to its resting place from West Wycombe House. Having marched three times round the mausoleum, the troops and spectators stood to hear 'an incantation' written and set to music by Dr. Arne: "The urn was then placed on a very elegant pedestal of white marble; after which minute guns were fired, and a triple salute from the soldiery. To give more dignity to this solemn celebration, the Oratorio of Goliah was performed in West Wycombe church, having been specially composed for the occasion. All persons were admitted, who gave a mite to the poor box, and a great concourse attended to pay their last respects to the guileless heart of honest Paul Whitehead."

Considering all things, perhaps the epithets 'guileless' and 'honest' were not the most appropriate that could have been chosen in this connection. But, after all, during his life's fitful fever Paul Whitehead must have possessed certain qualities sufficient to rescue his memory from the degradation in which some of his contemporaries, little better than himself as to morals, endeavoured to sink it. He was, after all, a poet, "an infamous but not despicable poet," is Horace Walpole's verdict; but Churchill would not even allow him this faint praise, if it can be denominated praise

which calls a man's works infamous and yet denies that they are despicable.

> " Come, Method, come in all thy pride,
> Dullness and Whitehead by thy side ;
> Dullness and Method still are one,
> And Whitehead is their darling son."

But Paul's poems are not by any means so dull as they are painted : he possesses the faculty of turning out much that, if read to anyone acquainted with Pope, might well be mistaken for the authentic offspring of the greater man. Like numbers of other eighteenth century bards, he is to-day wholly forgotten, not perhaps because of his insignificance as because of so much contemporary excellence in his special style of versification. There were so many men who did as well and better, that who, in these hurried days, has leisure to go

> " . . . gleaning
> Hedgeside chance-blades, while full-sheaved
> Stand cornfields by him ? . . ."

Well, Paul was no saint ; he was but a third-rate poet ; and in many qualities of head and heart he was far to seek. But he possessed many friends, and if some could turn upon him in his prosperity, there remained one at least to write these lines as his epitaph :

> " Here lies a man misfortune could not bend,
> Prais'd as a poet, honour'd as a friend ;
> Though his youth kindled with a love of fame,
> Within his bosom glow'd a brighter flame ;

> Whene'er his friends with sharp affliction bled,
> And from the wounded deer the herd was fled,
> Whitehead stood forth, the healing balm apply'd
> Nor quitted their distresses till he died."

And so the 'old Paul' of Churchill's satire, the associate of the Hell Fire orgies, the venal pamphleteer and the disregarded poet, was at least able, through that genius for friendship which he must have possessed, to make one day in Dashwood's life solemn, and to touch the soul of Garrick with a lyric kindliness.

CHAPTER VIII

ROBERT LLOYD

ROBERT LLOYD was a member, although not an outstanding one, of the Hell Fire Club, and as such properly finds a place in these pages. For a few hectic years he lived the life of a rake, but one can never quite think of this gentle, rather irresponsible, friendly fellow as a profligate in the sense in which others noticed in these pages were profligates. He was certainly never a rake at heart, and therefore although his short story points a moral it does so rather in spite of his own character than because of a marked predilection for vice on his part; and he remains one of the many young men of the eighteenth century who in a saner environment would have probably pursued a saner path. He is of that large band who have found circumstances too strong for a naturally pliable and rudderless disposition. If we do not regard the absolute essentials of probity, we may say that a man is good or bad according to his surroundings. Robert

Lloyd's surroundings and the friends he made were among the least of his advantages ; and he comes down to us rather in the guise of a human feather, blown hither and thither by contending winds, but always somehow fated to be chiefly buffeted by the winds of irregularity and imprudence.

And yet his beginnings might well have seemed to promise far better things. He was the son of Dr. Pierson Lloyd,[1] who for nearly half a century was usher and second master at Westminster School, and "whose learning, judgment and moderation endeared him to all who partook of his instructions," and was born in Westminster in 1733 ; so that he was two years younger than Charles Churchill, one year younger than George Colman, Richard Cumberland, Warren Hastings, and Elijah Impey, and the same age as Cowper, all of whom were his schoolfellows at Westminster. He was admitted a Queen's Scholar in 1746, and four years later became captain of the school. Richard Cumberland tells us of other notable men who were educated at Westminster at this time, a time when Pierson Lloyd was teaching the fourth form, and among them were Cracherode, the famous book-collector ; the Earls of Bristol and Bucking-

[1] Nichols : *Literary Anecdotes* ; where we are told that Dr. Lloyd enjoyed a pension of £400 a year from the King, George III. He died on January 5th, 1781, when this pension ceased ; but £100 a year was granted to his widow. Dr. Lloyd was sub-prebendary and chancellor of York, after his retirement from Westminster. Mrs. Lloyd was Anne, daughter of the Rev. J. M. de L'Angle, rector of Croughton, Northamptonshire.

hamshire, who were Cumberland's form fellows; Lord March (afterwards Duke of Richmond); Warren Hastings, and Colman; Robert Lloyd being then in the under school.

Young Robert early showed that he possessed brains and, at that time, powers of application; and in due course, to be precise in 1751, he was elected to a Westminster Scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took his degree in 1755.[1] But although he thus graduated, his career at the university was not unattended by adventure; indeed it is described as having been extremely irregular. The fact indicates a characteristic dominant throughout Lloyd's short life. He was one of those impressionable ones who are made to be the victims of their associates; and the associates with whom he came in touch were unfortunately those with whom riot is synonymous with pleasure, and idleness another name for enjoyment.

But even then a taste for letters exhibited itself in the intervals of 'wines' and excesses of other sorts, and we find Lloyd writing a long poem on "The Progress of Envy," in 1751, and contributing certain poetical effusions, not without promise, to *The Connoisseur*, a periodical projected and started as a criticism of the manners and morals of mankind, and having nothing to do with those arts which the title has now come to indicate, by Bonnell Thornton and George Colman, who almost

[1] He took his M.A. in the usual course, three years later.

entirely wrote it, and in such close collaboration that it is impossible to distinguish their individual work.

The Connoisseur, "one of the brightest and most entertaining of the mid-century Essayists,"[1] first appeared on January 31st, 1754, and the very few occasional contributors included Cowper. Lloyd's share was but a small one, and to his pen can be traced only four pieces: the verses in No. 67; a song in No. 72; a fable in No. 90; and an 'Epistle to a Friend' and another fable in No. 125. However, it was a beginning; and it is pleasant to think that his Cambridge vagaries were not entirely able to obliterate his love for literature.

On leaving Cambridge, without the Fellowship his father anticipated he would gain, he was rather at a loose end. Probably questioning his power to make a living by his pen, although like most young men he would doubtless have preferred a life that seems so easy, and perhaps influenced by his father, he secured a position as usher in his old school. In a piece called *The Author's Apology*, later prefixed to his collected poems, Lloyd indicates the drudgery of his scholastic employment, and the bitter recollections he entertained of it:

> "—Were I at once empower'd to shew
> My utmost vengeance on my foe,
> To punish with extremest rigour;
> I could invent no penance bigger
> Than using him as learning's tool
> To make him Usher of a school."

[1] Austin Dobson.

Unfortunately, he renewed his acquaintance with his former school-fellow, Charles Churchill, now in priest's orders and a husband, at that period before the latter had gone to his living at Rainham, and again when he returned to St. John's, Westminster, on the death of his father ; and with him " plunged into a reckless career of dissipation."

When two young men do this the friends of either attribute the error to the other. So it was in this case, and Churchill's partisans are found ready to lay the blame of his backsliding on Lloyd ; Lloyd's attributing his falling from grace to Churchill. Looking impartially at the matter, however, and considering the characters of both, I feel no doubt that it was Churchill, the older and more dominant, who led the younger and admittedly more impressionable, into those disastrous courses which had such an unfortunate influence on the after careers of each of them. One of the more immediate effects was Lloyd's resignation of his post as usher at Westminster. It had always been exceedingly irksome to him ; and he seems to have thought that he could make a living by the easier and more congenial practice of his pen—a daring experiment and one little justified by subsequent events.

His first sustained effort, if no longer remembered, was however destined, indirectly, to bring about the publication of a poem which made a great stir at the time, and is not even to-day, at least by

name, wholly forgotten. This initial attempt at a long poem by Lloyd was *The Actor*, which came out in 1760. Its appearance was not marked by any special portents or phenomena; indeed the public seems to have been little affected by it. And yet it contains much sound sense, presented in a neat and effective way, and criticises with remarkable judiciousness, for so young a writer, many of those glaring stage errors which have since been ridiculed by better known men; while its concluding lines are sufficiently strong and pointed to show that under other auspices Lloyd might have made an abiding name as a poet of manners. The lines are worth quoting for themselves, as well as affording an example of the work of a forgotten bard:

"Yet, hapless Artist! tho' thy skill can raise
The bursting peal of universal praise,
Tho' at thy beck applause delighted stands
And lifts, Briareus-like, her hundred hands,
Know, Fame awards thee but a partial breath!
Not all thy talents brave the stroke of death.
Poets to ages yet unborn appeal
And latest times th' Eternal Nature feel.
Tho' blended here the praise of bard and play'r,
While more than half becomes the actor's share,
Relentless death untwists the mingled fame
And sinks the player in the poet's name.
The pliant muscles of the various face,
The mien that gave each sentence strength and grace,
The tuneful voice, the eye that spoke the mind,
Are gone, nor leave a single trace behind."

On Churchill the poem acted as a suggestive incentive, and *The Rosciad*, which came out in the following year, dotted the i's and crossed the t's of the lesser work, and in its reckless satire on the stage and contemporary actors lent a sort of reflected glory to its prototype which, however, contained nothing of such personalities as Churchill indulged in. It was published anonymously, and the critics at once attributed it to the writer of *The Actor*. This insinuation Lloyd promptly denied through advertisements in the public prints ; what time Churchill declared himself, in the same manner, the real Simon Pure. The shower of Anti-Rosciads, Apologies, Murphiads, Churchilliads and other rejoinders *hoc omne genus* which followed, for long employed the hacks of Grub Street and held the attention of the critical and theatrical world ; and if Churchill carried it off with his usual rather blatant complacency, the gentler Lloyd must have been no little agitated by the explosion of which he had primarily, as it were, been the cause. *The Actor* had been dedicated to Bonnell Thornton, under whose aegis in *The Connoisseur*, as we have seen, Lloyd had tried his 'prentice hand at poetry.

Lloyd was now living by his pen and his wits. I say ' living,' but it must have been a precarious existence, and his income could have gone but a little way towards his expenditure in those pleasures and excesses into which he had been led. It must

have been about this time that he was enrolled as one of the monks of St. Francis ; and although we have no exact evidence on the matter, it is probable that it was through Churchill that he became a member of the Hell Fire Club. One visualises him as one of those easy-going young men who are only too ready to tread the primrose path (although the Franciscans probably attended little enough to the primroses on the river bank at Medmenham), and in the company of such men as Dashwood and Paul Whitehead and Wilkes and the rest no doubt indulged to the full in those orgies and profanities a delight in which was rather assumed than inherent. He was a very chameleon in this respect, and because his companions were riotous and extravagant, he must needs be extravagant and riotous, without the means either of constitution or pocket which many of his associates possessed to meet such excesses.

But for a time he managed to keep his head above water by various literary undertakings. In the first place he was engaged, under Andrew Kippis, in superintending a literary magazine called *The Library*, which, however, had but a short life—from 1761 to 1762 ; and, soon after, he became the editor of the *St. James's Magazine*, the first number of which appeared in September of the latter year. From this, it is certain, Lloyd expected great things ; and it started off with the fairest of promises. It was determined to keep

it purely literary, with a nice admixture of the critical and the scholarly; but like so many similar productions it soon fell away from its original intention, and 'padding' had often to be resorted to in the shape of political news and other items which could not by the widest stretch of the imagination be termed literary. Lloyd was assisted by, among others, Cowper, Bonnell Thornton, Dennis and Colman, the Bard of Olney sending in a "Dissertation on the modern Ode," and Colman contributing to its pages "The Cobbler of Cripplegate," in a letter to Robert Lloyd; while the editor himself was responsible for a comedy adapted from the French and entitled "The New School for Women." In the meanwhile Lloyd attempted to keep the wolf from the door by bringing out, in subscription form, a volume of poems, in which *The Actor* was incorporated. It has been said of this piece, which seems to have been inspired by Colley Cibber's *Apology*, just as it, as I have before remarked, inspired Churchill's *Rosciad*, that it is one of the most pleasing and scientific essays upon theatrical representation in general that has ever been written.

But poor Lloyd's financial position was rapidly going from bad to worse, and although Churchill's *Night*, which was addressed to him in 1761, must have helped to keep his name for a time before the public, it was but for a time; and the day soon dawned when he found that his thoughtless

and reckless improvidence had at last brought him to financial ruin.

Churchill seems in this epistle (for so it was called) to have been actuated to reply to Dr. Armstrong who, in his *Day, an Epistle to J. Wilkes, Esq.*, had censured both Churchill and Lloyd, and the former's principal object in his counterblast was to exculpate himself and his friend from the blame meted out to them on account of their irregularities and immoral conduct. I spare the reader extracts from the poem which is, after all, but a clever piece of special pleading clothed in Churchill's usual forcible and often quite effective bludgeoning style. I may, however, interpolate here Wilkes's note on the effusion, as it will at once show the attitude of the author of the *Essay on Woman* towards his two friends, and the kind of annotations he made to Churchill's poems ; annotations, by the way, which Walpole considered negligible :

" The poem of *Night* was written in vindication of himself and Mr. Robert Lloyd, against the censures of some false friends, who affected to pay the highest compliments to their genius, but were most industrious in seizing every opportunity of condemning their conduct in private life. These *prudent* persons found a malicious pleasure in propagating the story of every unguarded hour, and in gratifying that rage after the little anecdotes of admired authors upon which small wits subsist. Such a proceeding ought, however, in all fairness,

to be considered only as the low gossiping of the literary world, just as scandal amuses the circle of the gay and polite. The curiosity of the town was fed by these people from time to time; and every dull lecturer within the bills of mortality comforted himself that he did not keep such hours as Mr. Churchill and Mr. Lloyd.

"The poet does not blush to own that he often passed the night after the manner of 'the first men of antiquity.' They knew how to redeem the fleeting hours from 'Death's half-brother' and fellow-tyrant, 'Sleep.' They lamented the shortness and uncertainty of human life; but both only served to give a keener relish to their pleasures, and as the truest argument not to let any portion of it pass unenjoyed.

"These two English poets were worthy of the converse of the most genial wits of Rome and Greece. They might, perhaps, have been censured by some wondrous grave moderns, but in a more classic age their happy sallies would not have ill become the *noctes atticae*."

At last, after acting as editor to *The St. James's Magazine* for about two years, Lloyd gave up the conduct of the periodical to Kenrick;[1] and was shortly after arrested for debt. How far he had drawn on his friends' generosity, or even if he approached them at all with prayers for help,

[1] Kenrick lives in Goldsmith's *Retaliation*, but was otherwise of no importance.

is not recorded. One might have thought that among the members of the Hell Fire Club would have been found many to come forward voluntarily to his aid; but this was not so, and poor Lloyd, the friend of so many, the enemy of none but himself, was carried off to the Fleet Prison and there left to muse on his misguided ways.

There was, however, one of his associates who bestirred himself to assist the poor fellow. For no sooner had Churchill heard of his arrest than he came to his aid with what help he could, allowing him a guinea a week towards his support, besides paying for a servant to attend to his wants. He did, or tried to do, more. He proposed to raise a subscription among Lloyd's intimate acquaintances with a view to extricating him from his embarrassments. But all his efforts, and Churchill was not the man to make half-hearted ones, were useless. Of the many promises of help received hardly one was followed by actual performance, and even Bonnell Thornton, Lloyd's once close friend, to whom he had dedicated his *Actor*, and who was his debtor in various other ways, stood aloof, to the disgust of Wilkes [1] and to the surprise of Lloyd himself, who, writing to Wilkes after the death of Churchill, remarks: "My own affairs I forbear to mention; Thornton is what you believed him; I have many acquaintances, but *now* no friend

[1] See a letter he wrote from abroad to Colman concerning Thornton's attitude.

here." Indeed, Lloyd was to experience the truth of a line in Churchill's *Night*, and to realise that nearly every one of his former cronies was one

"Who meanly overlooks a friend distrest."

An anecdote connecting Lloyd with Goldsmith, and therefore in itself interesting, is here worth relating, as it helps to show those happy-go-lucky habits of the lesser bard, which were so largely responsible in bringing him within the arms of the law. I give the story, as told by Cooke, in *The European Magazine*:

"Goldsmith sitting one morning at the Chapter Coffee-house, Lloyd came up to him with great frankness, and asked him how he did? Goldsmith, who certainly was a very modest man, seeing a stranger accost him so intimately, shrunk back a little, and returned his inquiries with an air of distant civility. 'Pho! pho!' says Lloyd, 'my name is Lloyd and you are Mr. Goldsmith, and, though not formally introduced to one another, we should be acquainted as brother poets and literary men; therefore, without any ceremony, will you sup with me this evening at this house, where you will meet half-a-dozen honest fellows, who, I think, will please you?' Goldsmith, who admired the frankness of the introduction, immediately accepted. The party, which principally consisted of authors and booksellers, was, as Lloyd predicted, quite agreeable to Goldsmith, and the glass circulated to a late hour in the morning. A little before the

company broke up, Lloyd went out of the room, and, in a few minutes afterwards, his voice was heard rather loud in the adjoining passage in conversation with the master of the house. Goldsmith immediately flew to his new friend, to enquire what was the matter; when he found Lloyd in vain attempting to come to an understanding with the landlord, who, protesting that already he owed more than £14, swore that nothing should induce him to take either his word or his note for the reckoning. 'Pho! pho!' says Goldsmith, 'my dear boy, let's have no more words about the matter, 'tis not the first time a gentleman wanted cash; will you accept *my* word for the reckoning?' The landlord assented. 'Why then,' says Lloyd, whispering to him and forgetting all animosities, 'send in another cast of wine, and add it to the bill.' The bill had to be ultimately paid by Goldsmith."

Bonnell Thornton has by some been regarded as the man who first led Lloyd astray; others have, as we have seen, accused Churchill of being his bad angel. Be this as it may, the one certainly did all he could for his broken friend, while the other became his most bitter enemy and inexorable creditor. Wilkes and Garrick may be excepted from those who left their erstwhile boon companion to languish in the Fleet without a single effort to alleviate his distress, although alleviation was all they could compass.

These distresses were, as I have shown, to some extent mitigated by Churchill's good nature ; and were further lightened by some hack-work which Lloyd did for the booksellers ; and it must be remembered that he once asserted that being in the Fleet was not so bad as being an usher at Westminster !

Among the things he turned out while a prisoner were a translation of Klopstock's play *The Death of Adam,* which was published in 1763, and an English version of Marmontel's *Moral Tales,* which he produced, in conjunction with Charles Denis, in the following year. He also wrote a tale in verse, entitled *The New River-Head,* in the same year ; while only within three weeks of his death a play he had written called *The Capricious Lovers* was performed, but with little success, at Drury Lane (November 28th). For his death was imminent. I cannot do better than give the account of his last days, in the words of Southey :

" Lloyd had been apprised of Churchill's danger ; but when the news of his death was somewhat abruptly announced to him as he was sitting at dinner, he was seized with a sudden sickness, and saying, ' I shall follow poor Charles,' took to his bed, from which he never rose again ; dying, if ever man did, of a broken heart. The tragedy did not end here ; Churchill's favourite sister, who is said to have possessed much of her brother's sense and spirit and genius, and to have been betrothed

to Lloyd, attended him during his illness, and, sinking under the double loss, soon followed her brother and her lover to the grave."

Lloyd's death took place on December 15th, 1764, in his thirty-second year. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Bride's, Fleet Street. The Miss Churchill mentioned by Southey as being engaged to him and nursing him during his last illness was named Patience, and a correspondent to Nichols' *Literary Anecdotes* records his possession of a copy of the fourth edition of Lloyd's *Poems*, published in 1762, which he must have given to her. " It is," says the writer, a certain J. Brown, " pompously printed in quarto, with a very handsome list of subscribers, which fills 12 pages; and on the bottom of the title-page is written, in a strong black hand, like the signature of an editor to authenticate a publication, ' Patience Churchill, 1762.' "

In addition to the poems and tales already mentioned, Lloyd produced various other things which are now wholly forgotten. For instance, he wrote a piece called *The Tears and Triumphs of Parnassus*, which was published in 1760. This was an ode on the death of George II., but I have never read it and I am still wondering what connection George II. could possibly have had with Parnassus! In the following year a dramatic pastoral entitled *Arcadia, or The Shepherd's Wedding*, came from his pen. Neither can be said to

possess any abiding merit. He also contributed several prologues for plays by Garrick and Colman and his better known *Epistle to Churchill*; while, at an earlier period when he was a member of the 'Nonsense Club,' he collaborated with Colman in some clever parodies of Gray's *Progress of Poesy* and Mason's *Ode to Memory*, efforts which Walpole not unnaturally regarded as "trash, spirted from the kennel;" but of one of which, *The Ode to Obscurity*, Johnson once said that a considerable portion of it might "be numbered among those felicities which no man has twice attained." [1] For the rest, Lloyd no doubt wrote much as a bookseller's hack of which no record remains; for if he had squandered many regardless hours during his earlier years, when he was shut up in the Fleet, he applied himself with an unaccustomed assiduity to tasks that must often have been uncongenial enough.

Lloyd's character had two distinct sides. On the testimony of his friends he was an amiable, gentle fellow, a scholar with a facility for writing, a companion with a facility for being good and

[1] Dr. Warton wrote: "The odes of Gray were burlesqued by two men of wit and genius who, however, once said to me that they repented of the attempt," and in Lloyd's *Epistle to Churchill* the *amende honorable* is made in the following lines:—

> "What muse like Gray's shall pleasing, pensive flow,
> Attempered sweetly to the rustic woe,
> Or who like him shall sweep the Theban lyre
> And, as his master, pour forth thoughts of fire?"

amusing company. Cowper thought so highly of his poetic gifts that he described him as being :

> " . . . born sole heir and single
> Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle."

Wilkes shows us more of the man when he writes : " Lloyd was mild and affable in private life, of gentle manners, and very engaging in conversation. He was an excellent scholar, and an easy natural poet. His peculiar excellence was the dressing up of an old thought in a new, neat and trim manner. He was contented to scamper round the foot of Parnassus on his little Welsh pony, which seems never to have tired. He left the fury of the winged steed, and the daring heights of the sacred mountain, to the sublime genius of his friend Churchill."

From a moral point of view, however, his friendship with Churchill and Bonnell Thornton, and others of their set, was disastrous. Lloyd was one of those easy-going young men, weak of will and lovers of pleasure, who are destined so often to become the victims of more robust reprobates ; and if his name to-day survives rather as that of the friend of Churchill and Wilkes than on account of its owner's personal gifts, it only serves to show that he was too impressionable to be stable, and too compliant to be self-dependent.

A writer of our own day, whose acquaintance with that period was second to none, and who, indeed, seems to have known it as the men who moved in its orbit knew it, the late Austin Dobson,

has left this summary of Lloyd's rather complex character :

" Truth constrains us to add that he was weak-willed, fond of pleasure, and easily led away by companions whose social gifts were not ballasted with more solid merits. As a fact either from lack of ambition, or from a conscious sense of limitation, he never fulfilled the promise of his youth. He was a sound scholar, without the least touch of pedantry ; he had a fertile fancy, considerable humour, and an excellent judgment. The too-ready fluency on which he so much relied was nevertheless unfavourable to ' fundamental brain-work ; ' and the pressure of necessity frequently hurried him into reckless over-production. . . . His melancholy story exemplifies most of those ills which his great contemporary had gloomily declared to be the allotted portion of letters :

' Toil, Envy, Want, the Patron and the Jail.'

But he was spared the Patron."

Of all the rakes portrayed in these volumes, there is perhaps not one whom we can pity more sincerely than Robert Lloyd. For the unfulfilled promise of his youth, and his wasted life with its miserable ending, were the result of a weak compliance rather than of an inherent viciousness of disposition ; and his ineffective ghost haunts the stones of Westminster and the precincts of Medmenham somewhat strangely, in company with those of such full-blooded and determined reprobates as

Dashwood and Churchill and the rest. As a poet, he has long since been forgotten ;[1] as a man, he will be remembered as one whose broken purpose wasted itself in the hot air of an environment alien at once to his real character and his engrained but obfuscated good sense.

[1] Campbell, in his *Specimens of the British Poets*, gives a short notice of him, and quotes as an example of his work a piece called *Chit-Chat, an Imitation of Theocritus.*

CHAPTER IX

THE EARL OF SANDWICH

THE member of the Hell Fire Club who falls to be discussed in this chapter was a man of very varied attainments and of an exceedingly complex character. He possessed a kind of administrative ability, he had abundant energy and a certain decision of mind, and, what is more curious, a quite remarkable turn for business application. Whether these attributes tended towards the welfare, or otherwise, of the country, is a question variously answered by his friends and foes. In the eyes of his political opponents he could do nothing right ; in those of his supporters he did nothing wrong. In this respect his character comes down to us in common with those of an hundred men who by birth and position have been enabled to take a share in the governing of the country, and who have been as contradictorily judged by their contemporaries. But Lord Sandwich had another side to his character which nobody has been found willing to justify or defend : he

was a profligate in private life, as his enemies thought, or at least said, he was in his public capacity. His character was indeed an essentially licentious one, notorious even in an age when much allowance was made for private foibles; and in consequence he is to-day remembered rather as the 'Jemmy Twitcher' of popular indignation, the partaker in the orgies at Medmenham, the lover of the Miss Ray who fell a victim to Mr. Hackman's jealousy, than as the Minister of the Crown in various capacities and as the British ambassador to various countries. He was but eleven years of age when he succeeded his grandfather as fourth Earl; and it is interesting, as a study in heredity, to remember that his grandmother was the second daughter of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, who was, as we all know, one of the outstanding rakes of Charles II.'s Court, and whose career of profligacy and ultimate repentance I have attempted to trace in a previous volume. The Sandwich of the Georgian era is thus indirectly linked up with the Rochester of Caroline times. Lord Sandwich could hardly, however, claim to have inherited his rather extraordinary passion for business—the business of the State—from so easy-going a person as Rochester; that part of his character doubtless came from the founder of his house, the Edward Montagu who first earned the title through his energy and determination, and for the part he took in bringing back the royal exile to his kingdom, the

Montagu who bulks so largely in the pages of Pepys and who completed a strenuous career by getting blown up with his ship in an action with the Dutch.

The fourth Earl of Sandwich was a very different man from both these ancestors ; but he possessed dual qualities which may be traced to both, and which combined in producing his somewhat contradictory character. He was born on November 3rd, 1718, and was sent to Eton, whence in due course he passed to Trinity College, Cambridge, having in the meanwhile succeeded to the earldom on October 20th, 1729. At Eton Charles Pratt, to become the famous Lord Chancellor Camden, Thomas Gray the poet, Jacob Bryant, and Horace Walpole were among his contemporaries, and we find Gray writing to West, in after years, and saying with regard to Sandwich and Lord Halifax, who had then (1742) become statesmen : " Do you not remember them dirty boys playing at cricket ?"

On leaving the University Sandwich made the usual grand tour in France, Germany and Italy, and added to his knowledge of foreign lands by a further excursion to Constantinople and Cairo. Concerning his exploits in those lands we have no record, but his temperament was not one which would readily confine itself to the mere consideration of architectural wonders and the investigation of antiquarian *arcana* ; and it may be readily surmised that those habits of profligacy which formed one part of his character were cultivated

abroad, as we know they were subsequently at home.

He was, however, no mere pleasure-seeker ; he early showed political ambition, and on his return to England he attached himself to the Bedford party ; and when the Duke became First Lord of the Admiralty in Pelham's Ministry (1744), Sandwich was made one of the Junior Lords. In other ways, too, he was associated with the chief of the Russells, for in 1745 he became a captain in ' The Duke of Bedford's ' Regiment of Foot, and an aide-de-camp to the Duke himself, being gazetted a colonel on October 4th of the same year. In November 1746 he was appointed Plenipotentiary to the States of Holland, and in 1748 he attended the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in order to conduct the preliminaries of the treaty of peace. It has been said that he made so many childish blunders in this capacity that an able and experienced minister was obliged to be sent from Vienna on purpose to rectify them ; and that on his arrival this minister declared that no one point of real importance had been settled ; even the usual and necessary forms of the ratification of former treaties having been omitted.[1]

Without wholly subscribing to this rather wholesale charge, which is, after all, made by an unfriendly critic, there seems no reason to suppose that Sandwich was a master of diplomatic art, or

[1] See Almon's *Life of Wilkes.*

indeed a man of any special outstanding capability in such directions. He had, however, a kind of passion for hard work ; he was devoured with the demon of activity, which is not always synonymous with heaven-born gifts, although the two have not infrequently been allied. That he was in business tedious and slow and dull (he has been thus accused) is probable enough, and the fact that he was accustomed to rise at six in the morning, and at one time to be immersed in public affairs till late in the evening, shows, considering his not outstanding position in the government of the country, that it took him longer to get through his work than it would have done a quicker witted man. There is no merit or demerit in the matter ; it was simply one of temperament. But he was certainly one of the few men in England who have not made an impression by assiduity and application, characteristics so often mistaken with us for talent and even genius.

As a man of title, position and wealth, he was naturally marked out for administrative advancement ; and it is not surprising to find him, on his return from Aix-la-Chapelle, appointed First Lord of the Admiralty and a Privy Councillor. But he was not destined to hold the former office long. The death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, had weakened the opposition to Pelham's administration, and this, together with a reconciliation with his brother the Duke of Newcastle, determined that statesman to do without the help of the Bedford faction. His

first step in this direction was the dismissal of Sandwich, which was followed, as no doubt Pelham anticipated, by the resignation of the Duke of Bedford in 1751.

Sandwich was now without political employment, and to this period can, I think, be dated his association with the Hell Fire Club, as well as some of those incidents which helped to build up his character as a rake of a peculiarly licentious kind. The energy with which he had thrown himself into public business he now displayed in the pursuit of private pleasure and vice ; and if it would be unfair to suppose him, as some have done, most infamous in every respect and one who had, by an abandoned and profligate youth, arrived at middle age without the possession of the smallest degree of virtue or honour, there is no doubt that he was one of the most licentious of the Franciscans, and that his conduct with regard to women was often as perfidious and mean as it was loose and barefaced. Judged even by the low standard of contemporary morals, he left much to seek ; and if we cannot quite agree that " he was restrained by no considerations of private character, nor checked by any regard to public decorum," which was said of him, we must assent to much of the blame and obloquy that has accumulated round his name. It is to the pages of *Chrysal,* as I have shown in the first chapter of this book, that we are indebted for a description of the Order of St. Francis and the

rites which were practised by them; and it was Chrysal's new master, otherwise Lord Sandwich, who carried it[1] into those unholy haunts. Some extracts from the work may be given, as they directly concern the neophyte's initiation into the Medmenham set.

"On his landing in the island he went to the monastery, where he found the society just sitting down to dinner, at which he took his place among them. When they had made a short meal, and drank their spirits up to a proper pitch, they retired to their respective cells to prepare for the solemnity they were going to celebrate. My master, then clad in a milk white robe of the finest linen, that flowed loosely around him, repaired, at the tolling of a bell, to the chapel, the scene of all their mysterious rites, and knocking gently thrice at the door, it was opened to him, to the sound of soft and solemn musick.

"On his entrance he made a most profound obeisance, and advancing slowly towards a table that stood against the wall in the upper end of the chapel. As soon as he came to the rails, by which it was surrounded, he fell upon his knees, and making a profession of his principles, nearly in the words, but with the most gross perversion of the sense, of the articles of faith of the religion established in the country, demanded admission within the rails, the peculiar station of the upper order, where the

[1] Chrysal, it will be remembered, was a guinea.

superior and eleven of the fraternity (the twelfth place was vacant and now to be filled up) stood arrayed in the habits of those whose names and characters they profaned by their assumption."

There were other candidates, but only Sandwich and another, Wilkes, had the courage to seek the higher honour. As a result of the voting, the former was elected on that occasion, " and he was accordingly admitted within the rails, where he received the name and character which he was to bear in the society, in a manner not properly to be described, even the most sacred rite and ceremony of Religion being profaned, all the prayers and hymns of praise appointed for the worship of the Deity burlesqued by a perversion to the horrid occasion."

The author of *Chrysal* makes this the moment when Wilkes is said to have introduced a baboon into the assembly—an incident responsible for the breaking up of the club. But Sandwich must have been a member for several years before this occurred, as the Hell Fire Club continued till 1762, and was only dispersed on the superior becoming Lord le Despencer.

There is no necessity to recapitulate even those details of the fraternity which can decently be noticed, as this has been done in former chapters of this book ; but I may say that, from all accounts, Sandwich was one of the most outstanding of the members in the daring both of his profanity and

profligacy ; and like Wilkes and Dashwood, he was one of those who relieved the tedium of political activity by parodying the religion of the country and affronting its morals.

There is no doubt that a certain class of woman was introduced from time to time into Medmenham Abbey, and with that class of woman Sandwich's acquaintance was, to use words now famous, 'extensive and peculiar.' His knowledge of the low haunts around Drury Lane was hardly confined to topographical curiosity ; his dealings with persons of the calibre of Mother Needham and Mother Bentley were anything but innocent, and there is a story (told at inordinate length) in *Chrysal,* with regard to the seduction of a young girl by the intemperate Earl, which might seem suitable to the vile arts of Colonel Charteris himself.

It was at a later date that Sandwich became connected with Miss Ray, whose story, with its tragic ending, stands forth in Eighteenth Century annals with a prominence rather out of proportion to its importance ; but it is certain that throughout his life he was that kind of rake in whose mind the ruin of innocence holds a foremost, if not the foremost, place. For a time, however, after he returned to office in 1755 as Vice-Treasurer, Receiver General and Paymaster of Ireland, he again took up public duties with an assiduity as marked as he had shown during his rule at the Admiralty, to

which post he was again appointed in 1763; while two years later he became Secretary of State for the Southern Department. As it is rather Lord Sandwich's private character than his public employment which here interests us, although the latter cannot well be entirely ignored, I will, for the sake of convenience, here summarise his official posts. He was Joint Postmaster-General from 1760 to 1770; Secretary of State for the Northern Department from the latter year till 1771, and again First Lord of the Admiralty from 1771 till 1782; he held, *inter alia*, the offices of Ranger of St. James's and Hyde Parks, and High Steward of Godmanchester; and he reached the grade of General in the Army in 1772.

It was while he was Secretary of State for the Southern Department, in 1765, that he gained the *sobriquet* which has ever since been attached to his name. As we have already seen in the chapter on Wilkes, that extraordinary man had among other delinquencies written and privately printed his notorious *Essay on Woman*. He had shown it in manuscript to but two people, of whom Sandwich was one and Dashwood the other; and both approved of its wit and, apparently, of its morals. It was, indeed, addressed to Sandwich, and it opens with an invocation parodied from Pope's *Essay on Man*, which begins: "Arise, my St. John!" with the words, "Awake, my Sandwich!" The notes to the poem, which purported to be written by



LORD SANDWICH.

[*face p.* 190.]

Bishop Warburton, were apparently supplied by the notorious Thomas Potter. The matter came up before the House of Lords, as a sort of pendant to the prosecutions of Wilkes in the matter of No. 45 of *The North Briton*, and Horace Walpole thus recounts to Lord Hertford what happened on this occasion: "On the first day, in *your* House . . . Lord Sandwich laid before the House the most blasphemous and indecent poem that ever was composed, called '*An Essay on Woman, with notes, by Dr. Warburton.*' I will tell you none of the particulars; they were so exceedingly bad, that Lord Lyttelton begged the reading might be stopped. The House was amazed; nobody ventured even to ask a question, so it was easily voted everything you please, and a breach of privilege into the bargain. Lord Sandwich then informed your lordships that Mr. Wilkes was the author. Fourteen copies alone were printed, one of which the ministry had bribed the printer to give up. Lord Temple then objected to the manner of obtaining it; and Bishop Warburton, as much shocked at infidelity as Lord Sandwich had been at obscenity, said, 'the blackest fiends in hell would not keep company with Wilkes when he should arrive there.' Lord Sandwich moved to vote Wilkes the author, but this Lord Mansfield stopped, advertising the House that it was necessary first to hear what Wilkes could say in his defence."

The impropriety, to say nothing else, of a man with Sandwich's record getting up and accusing Wilkes of profanity and indecency[1] must have surprised the House of Lords quite as much as the matter of the *Essay* could have done. Even Walpole, who acknowledges that the production of the poem so dramatically was a masterly piece of tactics, hints as much when he remarks (in a letter to Mann) that "the wicked even affirm, that very lately, at a club with Mr. Wilkes, held at the top of the playhouse in Drury Lane, Lord Sandwich talked so profanely that he drove two harlequins out of the company." I may here remark that this club was the Beefsteak, to which Sandwich had been elected a member on December 19th, 1761, and from which he was subsequently expelled.[2]

At the time when Sandwich turned on his old boon companion of the Hell Fire Club, *The Beggar's Opera* happened to be performing at Covent Garden, and when Macheath uttered the words, "That Jemmy Twitcher should peach me, I own surprised me!" the audience, who may have heard the then

[1] Lord Chesterfield, writing to his son, thus wittily refers to the incident: "Happy is it for this nation, that God hath been pleased to raise up in Mr. Wilkes a patriotic defender of our rights and liberties, and in the Earl of Sandwich so zealous a defender of our religion and morals."

[2] Walpole to George Montagu, Nov. 20th, 1763: "Sandwich has outsandwiched himself. He has impeached Wilkes for a blasphemous poem, and has been expelled for blasphemy himself by the Beefsteak Club."

current report that Sandwich, only a fortnight before, had been with Wilkes at a convivial gathering at the London Tavern, and had there joined him in singing a number of lewd songs, at once took up the phrase and applied the name of Jemmy Twitcher to the false friend. It has stuck to him ever since, and will stick so long as his memory lasts. During the remainder of his life he was better known by it than by his own title, and one even finds Walpole, in his letters, applying the name to him as if it was actually his own. We have evidence of Sandwich's persecution of George Townshend and neglect of Horace Mann, but nothing shows his inherent villainy better than this hypocritical horror at something of which he himself was equally capable, and, above all, this mean attack on a man he had used as a companion and called a friend. Walpole, many years before, had remarked of him that there was " an inveteracy, a darkness, a design and cunning in his character which stamp him as a very unamiable young man ; " adding, " it is uncommon for a heart to be so tainted so young ; " and the *Essay on Woman* incident only shows that he was consistent, in advancing years, with the promise of his earlier days. No wonder it was said of him that he was " universally hated."

But he was not only ungrateful and disloyal ; he proved himself to lack the most elementary ideas of a sense of humour ; otherwise how could he

possibly have allowed himself to be nominated for the post of High Steward of the University of Cambridge? But in 1764 this portent happened, and the man whose name was a byword of immorality, the Franciscan whose doings can only be hinted at in decent pages, came forward to contest a high office in a University in which the fear of God and moral conduct were at least regarded as a necessary equipment to the most insignificant student. Thomas Gray wrote a stinging pasquinade on the occasion, entitled *The Candidate, or the Cambridge Courtship*, in which he makes "Divinity" (for Sandwich actually obtained no little support from the clergy) address him thus:

> "Never hang down your head, you poor penitent elf!
> Come, buss me, I'll be Mrs. Twitcher myself."

Writing to Warton, Gray says: "Had not Lord Hardwicke" (he was Sandwich's opponent) "surprisingly recover'd by a Quack-Medicine, I believe in my conscience the noble Earl of Sandwich had been chosen, tho' (let me do them the justice to say) not without a considerable opposition." But even his own supporters were disgusted by their nominee's conduct. One of them told him he would ruin the University, to which he merely replied: "That would be nothing to him; it would be the better for Oxford,"—this University being then first favourite with the Court. The 'Twitcherites,' as they were nick-named, were regularly hissed by the undergraduates; and it is said that when, on one

occasion, Sandwich was invited to dinner at Trinity, they rose *en masse* on his arrival and ostentatiously left the hall.

Sandwich's want of popularity in London was hardly less marked, and on the public occasions on which he appeared, cries of ' Jemmy Twitcher ! ' were generally to be heard. That at a time of such general unrest as that during which the Gordon Riots broke out, Sandwich should be a marked man is not surprising, and once when a determined attack was made on his carriage he narrowly escaped the fury of the populace—a fury which his personal as well as his political character equally exacerbated. Nor was this enmity confined to the mob ; the King evinced a great dislike to the man who had used, in 1765, the meanest misrepresentations in order to induce His Majesty to strike the name of his mother, the Princess Dowager of Wales, out of the Regency Bill. When George III. found how he had been tricked he was furious, and two months later dismissed the ministry.

It was, however, in 1779 that Sandwich's name was, through an indirect circumstance, again brought prominently before the public. At that time Wraxall describes him thus : " Though he had already attained his sixty-second year, his licentious mode of life seemed more befitting a Minister of Charles the Second than a confidential servant of George the Third. His fortune, which did not alto-

gether correspond with his high rank and habits of gratification or expense, was supposed to lay him open to seduction ; or at least to render him capable of listening to propositions that a more independent man might have disdained. His enemies, who were numerous and violent, maintained that even official appointments were sometimes conferred under conditions not honourable to the First Lord of the Admiralty. . . . All the eloquence of Fox in one House of Parliament, and all the laborious pertinacity of the Duke of Richmond in the other, had been employed during successive sessions, not without effect, in impressing the public mind with unfavourable sentiments towards him. Palliser was represented as the object of his partiality, Keppel as the victim of his persecution." Ever since his betrayal of Wilkes, too, he had been subjected to the fury of the demagogue, who called him " the most abandoned man of his age," [1] and of Churchill, who aimed at him those lines in *The Candidate*, which ran :

> " Search East, search Hell, the Devil cannot find
> An agent like *Lothario* to his mind."

The circumstance to which I have alluded had, however, nothing to do with Sandwich's political shortcomings ; but it shed a fresh light on his private affairs—in a word, it was the murder of Miss Ray by the Rev. James Hackman. Walpole thought it the strangest story he had ever heard ;

[1] *Letters to the Electors of Aylesbury.*

to a more sophisticated age this result of love and jealousy will hardly appear so astonishing. But then Horace had not heard all the circumstances, as we know them to-day. "In my opinion," he exclaims, "we are growing more fit for Bedlam than for Mahomet's paradise," a remark we have not infrequently heard made in our own time.[1]

Miss Martha Ray was the *maîtresse en titre* of Lord Sandwich. He had first seen her behind the counter of a milliner's shop in Tavistock Street, when he was making some purchases there. She was the daughter of a labouring man living at Elstree, according to one account, although another makes her father a stay-maker in Holywell Street, Strand. The point is not material. All that concerns us here is that Sandwich, who was old enough to be her father, seduced her from her employment, had her educated, especially in music and singing, for which arts he had a partiality (one of his few attractive traits), and finally took her to his place, Hinchinbrook, where, to the distress of Lady Sandwich and his own lasting disgrace, he established her as his mistress. There her conduct, so far as outward appearances went, was all that the most exacting could have desired; and if her presence was objectionable to the family, at least she in some way

[1] In view of a more or less recent case, it is interesting to hear Walpole saying: "The poor criminal, I am persuaded, is mad—and the misfortune is the law does not know how to define the shades of madness, and then, there are twenty out-pensioners of Bedlam for one that is confined."

made up for it by the beauty of her singing and the modesty of her behaviour—she even charmed the wife of a bishop into an unexpected complacency—in a word, she was not so bad as she was painted by ecclesiastical imagination. She was, too, we are told, singularly attractive in appearance, although the portrait which Nathaniel Dance painted of her would hardly lead us to suppose it. That two people thought so, however, is evident ; one being her ' protector,' Lord Sandwich, the other a certain lieutenant in the 68th Regiment of Foot, one James Hackman.

This gentleman happened to be on a recruiting party at Huntingdon, and at a ball there was introduced to Lord Sandwich. So agreeable did he make himself that he was invited to Hinchinbrook, and there incontinently fell head over heels in love with Miss Martha Ray. He had the most honourable intentions, and tried all his powers of persuasion to induce her to leave Lord Sandwich, and to become his wife. All sorts of reasons are given for the young lady's refusal, but the one that attributes to her the remark that she did not choose to carry a knapsack may have some truth in it ; for Hackman not long after exchanged the Army for the Church, in that easy and rather incomprehensible way in which, in those times, such things were effected. But the cloth had no greater power to change Miss Ray's feelings than the epaulettes had ; and the Rev. James Hackman, now become Vicar

of Wyverton, in Norfolk, sighed in vain. It is rather curious that the lady did not respond to his wishes, as we know that she was at this time not a little alarmed by ballads sung under the windows of the rooms in the Admiralty which, when Lord Sandwich was in London, she occupied with him. She feared the fury of the mob (which can be so moral if it suits its purpose), and there is reason to believe that she thought neither she nor Lord Sandwich safe when they went out.

It would seem, indeed, that she contemplated taking up singing professionally, and once told Mr. Cradock, a friend of Lord Sandwich's, that she had been offered £3,000 a year and a benefit by the managers of the Italian opera. The fact that no settlement had been made on her, and that she was anxious to relieve her protector of further expense, may also have been for much in making her ready to *rangé* herself.

In the meanwhile Hackman was daily growing more desperate; and at last, finding all appeals useless, and life without Miss Ray a desert, he determined to commit suicide. But he did not elect to do the deed in the depths of Norfolk; no doubt he wished the young lady to witness the result of her obduracy. Who, however, can tell the thoughts of one in such a deplorable state of mind? He came to London where Miss Ray then was, and sought an interview for a certain evening, that of April 7th, 1779. She told him she was

engaged, but refused to say where. Full of suspicions, he watched from the Cannon Coffee House in Cockspur Street, and presently saw her pass in a hackney-coach. He followed it to Covent Garden Theatre, where she got out. She had come to see *Love in a Village*. During the performance Hackman wandered about the house, diversifying his employment by drinking brandy and water at the Bedford Coffee House opposite. While watching Miss Ray during the play he is said to have seen her flirting with a certain Mr. Macnamara, and this may have determined him, in his distraught state of mind, to add murder to his other contemplated crime. The sequel is to be found recorded in the newspapers of the following day. They vary in their details, but all substantially tell the story as it thus appeared in the *Morning Post* for April 9th :

" On Wednesday night, Miss Reay" (so the name is sometimes found written ; Walpole calls her Wray—they are both incorrect) " was coming out of the playhouse, accompanied by Signora Galli and a gentleman who had politely offered to see her to her carriage, when she was followed by the resolute assassin who committed the fact. He stepped up to her just as she had her foot on the step of the coach, pulled her by her sleeve, which occasioned her to turn round, when, without the smallest previous menace or address, he put a pistol to her forehead, and shot her instantly dead. He then

fired another at himself, which however did not prove equally effectual. The ball grazed upon the upper part of the head, but did not penetrate sufficiently to produce any fatal effect; he fell, however, and so firmly was he bent upon the entire completion of the fatal business he had meditated, that he was found beating his head with the utmost violence with the butt-end of the pistol, by Mr. Mahon, apothecary of Covent Garden, who wrenched the instrument from his hand. He was carried to the Shakespeare Tavern, where his wound was dressed. The body of the lovely victim was likewise carried to the same place. In his pockets were found two letters: one a copy of a letter he had written to Miss Reay, and the other to his brother-in-law, Mr. Booth, of Craven Street. The first of these epistles is replete with warm expressions of affection to the unfortunate object of his love, and an earnest recommendation of his passion. The other contains a pathetic relation of the melancholy resolution he had taken, and a confession of the cause that produced it.

"When he had so far recovered his faculties as to be capable of speech, he enquired with great anxiety concerning Miss Reay. Being told she was dead, he desired her poor remains might not be exposed to the observation of the curious multitude; adding, he had only to curse the pistol, or his hand, that prevented the same fate he designed for himself. About five o'clock in the morning

Sir John Fielding came to the Shakespeare, and, not finding his wounds of a dangerous nature, committed him to Tothill Fields Bridewell, where he now lies in a fair way of recovery."

The effect on Lord Sandwich is thus described: "When the news of the above misfortune was carried to the Admiralty, it was received by her noble admirer with the utmost concern. He wept exceedingly and lamented, with every other token of grief, the interruption of a connection which had lasted seventeen years, with great and uninterrupted felicity on both sides." What Lady Sandwich, down in Huntingdonshire, had to say about the matter is not recorded.

On April 14th the remains of Miss Ray were buried in the churchyard of Elstree. Lord Sandwich retired with his grief, and perhaps his regrets, to Richmond for a few days; Hackman was tried for murder at the Old Bailey, and was duly executed at Tyburn on April 19th. Boswell attended the trial, and not only told Johnson all about it, but also wrote a letter to the *St. James's Chronicle* on the subject. He evinced his interest, too, in the unfortunate young man by going with him to Tyburn, and then taking "an affectionate leave" of him. In the following year a curious book, entitled *Love and Madness*, written by Sir Herbert Crofts, appeared. It is made up of letters supposed to have been written by Miss Ray and Hackman. Walpole doubted whether these epistles were genuine; and

he was right to be sceptical, as they have since been proved to be fictitious.

This Ray incident formed the culmination of Lord Sandwich's career. Not long after, on the accession of the Coalition Ministry to power, he fell with Lord North, narrowly escaping a vote of censure on account of his conduct at the Admiralty. He was subsequently made Ranger of the Parks, a sort of exchange which heralded, if it did not actually date, his political extinction. He then retired practically into private life, living for another ten years, during which he was able to repent of many of his ways, in an enforced idleness which must, even at his advanced age, have been tedious to one who, with all his faults, was always an assiduous worker. He died on April 30th, 1792, in his 74th year, and it is probable that few men who have held so many and such various offices have left so little to be remembered by as the fourth Earl of Sandwich of the peerage, and the Jemmy Twitcher of the wits.

In his retirement he was neither respected nor loved. There were indeed too many things against him even to allow of his patronage of Captain Cook, or his friendship with Sir Joseph Banks, or his support of the claims of Rodney, to do more than shed very mild and fitful rays in the Cimmerian darkness of his repellent character. He was not even a good speaker, his discourses being, in the words of a contemporary, " awkward, loose and

detached"—as awkward as his attitudes, as detached as his thoughts, as loose as his morals, in fact.

Among some sketches of public characters generally attributed to Lord Chesterfield, is one on Sandwich, and there is this passage in it :

" The art of robbing vice of its disgust, and throwing around it the mantle of convivial pleasure, belongs in a very peculiar manner to this nobleman. I understand, that from his youth to the present time, he has proceeded in one uniform, unblushing course of debauchery and dissipation. His conversation is chiefly tinctured with unchaste expressions and indecent allusions ; and some have assured me that, if these were to be omitted by him, much of his wit, or, at least, what is called his wit, would be lost."

What an epitaph !

CHAPTER X

BUBB-DODINGTON, LORD MELCOMBE

A MAN who has been satirized by Pope and Foote and Hanbury Williams, whose vanity and foibles have been exposed by Richard Cumberland, and whose innate dishonesty and time-serving have been recorded by himself, is obviously one who properly takes his place in a gallery of rakes, both political and social. But as a member of the Hell Fire Club he has an even greater right to a place in these pages, and the 'Bubo' of the *Dunciad*, and the 'Sir Thomas Lofty,' of *The Patron*, are matched by the Amphytrion of Hammersmith and the Franciscan of Medmenham.

The world knows Bubb-Dodington, the world, that is, that remembers him at all, as the outstanding type of the time-serving politician; the man who changed his party as he changed his coat; the man who was at once the butt and tool of an opposition court. In this respect we find him among those now mostly forgotten "people

of importance in their day," whom Browning chose as pegs on which to hang his lyrical exposition on the vagaries of human nature; just as he comes down to us from the mass of rather contradictory Eighteenth Century recollections, as a fat, plethoric man, given to somnolence, but occasionally awaking to give vent to equally plethoric utterances of a kind of wit which is as *démodé* as the elaborate garments he wore or the *rococo* decorations with which he loved to encumber his houses.

He was a rich man and he delighted in playing the patron; and a patron in those days could always purchase praise, even from men like Young and Thomson, Fielding[1] and Mallett, who, with less excuse than some poetasters of the period, are found indulging in an orgy of fulsome adulation. Poverty justifies much, and there were few bards of the days of the Georges who were not poor; and so we find them flattering those whom we, having no axes to grind, can afford to judge on less partial grounds. A man might have all the

[1] Thomson, at the beginning of his *Summer*, addresses Dodington as his Muse's early friend:

> " In whom the human graces all unite;
> Pure light of mind, and tenderness of heart;
> Genius and wisdom, the gay social sense,
> By decency chastised: goodness and wit
> In seldom-meeting harmony combined;
> Unblemish'd honour, and an active zeal
> For Britain's glory, Liberty, and Man! "

While Fielding, in a poem entitled *True Greatness*, describes him as irradiating all the virtues, and as possessing that true greatness that " lives but in the noble mind." It is all very sad,

qualities of a rake and a ruffian, but if he was rich and willing enough to afford protection to a scribbler, he might at least be sure that he would receive from Grub Street sufficient to pander even to his desire for adulation, and could complacently set such venal tributes against the opinions of less prejudiced persons.

Bubb-Dodington was in every respect a man after the heart of those who lived by pandering to the self-love of the wealthy. His vanity was inordinate, his selfishness excessive, his complacency undisturbable, and beneath it all there was inherent viciousness and that sort of calculating *bonhomie* which the egoist knows so well how to assume. This quality imposed on men whom one would have thought the least likely to be influenced by it, and who are unable, or unwilling, to read the true manuscript of Dodington's soul beneath the palimpsest of his assumed geniality.

We can forgive the dependence of those forgotten scribblers who could hail him as :

> " Descended from old British sires ;
> Great Dodington to Kings allied ; "

when all the world knew that he was the son of a small chemist in a provincial town ; but that men like Warton and Bentley could stoop to re-echo such nauseous nonsense is indeed surprising ; and yet we find the one producing such lines as these :

> " To praise a Dodington, rash bard ! forbear !
> What can thy weak and ill-timed voice avail,
> When on that theme both Young and Thomson fail ? "

and the other comparing him with Lord Halifax. There is hardly, I think, anything more objectionable than Bubb-Dodington's character, unless it be the amazing hallucination which led the poet-laureate and the great scholar so far to depart from their sense of propriety as thus to eulogise the laughing-stock of more perspicacious men.

The condemnation of Bubb-Dodington does not come only from his avowed enemies or from his impartial critics ; it is founded on his own showing, and proceeds from his own pen. He wrote, as all the world knows, a diary, and unfortunately for his good name that diary was unblushingly printed after his death. A man has to be very circumspect who can exhibit himself well in an autobiography. But Bubb-Dodington was either too thick-skinned, or was too inherently dead to what is connoted by the words honour and integrity, to seem to have cared what he set down in the pages of his self-revelation. Even the editor of this astonishing record declares that all his political conduct was " wholly directed by the base motives of vanity, selfishness and avarice," and in its pages we find in the man's *ipsissima verba* a proof of his essential treachery, servility and sensuality :

> " . . . Hence the scoff
> That greets your very name : folk see but one
> Fool more, as well as knave, in Dodington,"

as Browning writes at the close of his ' parleying ' with the egregious egoist and turncoat-politician.

The fact that a certain Jeremiah Bubb, described as an apothecary living at Weymouth,[1] succeeded in marrying a daughter of John Dodington by Hester his wife, a daughter of Sir Peter Temple, lends probability to the further report that the said Jeremiah was a fortune-hunter. Be this as it may, the fact remains, and in the course of time, to be precise in 1691, a child was born to Mr. and Mrs. Bubb, who was destined to become the Bubb-Dodington of my story. Of his youth little or nothing is known ; but he is said to have been at Oxford, although what college harboured him, or if he took a degree, or if those qualities that later distinguished him revealed their budding promise on the banks of the Cher, report sayeth not.

It would seem that the Dodington family[2] (ignorant, of course, of what they were making themselves responsible for) showed a friendly interest in the offshoot of their stock, and in due course made his election for a pocket-borough they possessed, that of Weymouth, possible ; and young George Bubb found himself representing that place in the Parliament of 1715. In May of the same year he was sent as an extra envoy

[1] Some say Carlisle, and it is a curious fact that a certain Captain Bubb, described by Narcissus Luttrell as " gentleman usher in daily waiting," and a Member of Parliament who was also Governor of Carlisle, died in February 1692. If he was a relation (and the name is so uneuphonious that one hopes there were not many of them) it indicates that at least one member of the Bubb family was not quite undistinguished.

[2] They had been settled in Somerset for a considerable time.

to Spain, as a successor to Sir Paul Methuen. I see in this the hand and influence of his maternal uncle, George Dodington, who was a man of importance, as the references to him in contemporary records, that of Luttrell for instance, prove, and who had been earlier associated with Methuen in various matters.

For two years George Bubb remained in Spain, and in the British Museum is a collection of documents concerning this incident—an incident that preceded the war of 1718, arising out of the Quadruple Alliance against that country. He signed the Treaty of Madrid in 1717, and thereupon returned to England, if not with glory, at least with those laurels which may be said to be due to a successful negotiator. He was yet but a young man, and might fairly be supposed to have given evidence of being an intelligent, honest and sober one. What happened during the next three years, is, as in the case of Viola's sister, a blank ; but we may suppose him occupied with his parliamentary duties, and perhaps evolving those schemes of advancement in which he was later to do such violence to his conscience in compassing. But in 1720 a change occurred in his prospects of a most momentous character. His uncle George Dodington died, and it was found that he had left the whole of his immense estate to the lucky young man. George Bubb forthwith added the name of Dodington to his own less



GEORGE BUBB-DODINGTON

[*face p.* 210.]

euphonious patronymic—and he evolves himself as George Bubb-Dodington, not improbably by his uncle's testamentary wishes, but certainly, one imagines, to his own satisfaction.

Among other property which he inherited was the estate of Eastbury, on which was a mansion still incomplete. He at once set himself to finish this, and for that purpose called in the architectural aid of Sir John Vanbrugh, the fashionable designer of the day, who had already produced Castle Howard and Blenheim, and was later to justify his famous epitaph by creating Grimsthorpe. Vanbrugh's love of the gigantic and massive exactly appealed to Bubb-Dodington, whose political time-serving is almost obliterated (if anything could obliterate it) by his mania for show and ostentation. He is said to have spent the enormous sum of £140,000 on finishing and embellishing his new possession, in which the solidity of Vanbrugh's architecture was lightened (if anything could lighten it) by the airier graces of Thornhill's painted ceilings.

With a great fortune, a great house, and much Parliamentary influence (he is known to have directed the *free* suffrages of Winchelsea, Weymouth, Melcombe Regis—which sent four members to Westminster—and Bridgewater), Bubb-Dodington had really become a person of importance in his day. He was made Lord-Lieutenant of Somersetshire in 1721 ; he sat in Parliament for Bridgewater

from 1722 to 1754; and in 1724 he became a Lord of the Treasury in succession to Henry Pelham; besides holding, for life, the sinecure post of Clerkship of the Pells in Ireland.

If we determine to ignore Dodington's political time-serving and tergiversations (and here it will only be necessary very lightly to touch on them), we shall discover certain elements in his character which account for the fact that he numbered among his friends such diverse people as Fielding and Lord Lyttleton; and that Thomson and Young were of those who were willing to be patronised by the Mæcenas of Eastbury and Hammersmith. Perhaps the best, because the fullest, description we have of him at 'La Trappe,' as he facetiously called his surburban residence, is that which Richard Cumberland has left us. Cumberland's *Memoirs* is not a very well-known book, and I shall therefore paraphrase what he has to say about this aspect of Dodington's career—the aspect, that is, of the patron of letters and *l'Amphytrion chez qui on dîne*; the man, as Mallet sings:

> "Whose soups and sauces duly season'd,
> Whose wit well tim'd and sense well reason'd,
> Give Burgundy a brighter stain,
> And add new flavour to Champagne."

Cumberland begins by telling us that Dodington lived at "a splendid villa" at Hammersmith, "which by the rules of contraries he was pleased to call La Trappe, and his intimate and familiars

the monks of the convent,"—in which, I think, we can recognise a sort of parodying of Dashwood's institution at Medmenham, of which Dodington was also a monk. His chief cronies were Mr. Wyndham, his relation and heir, Sir William Breton, at that time Privy Purse to the King, and Dr. Thompson, " a physician out of practice " and a well-known quack of the period whom Walpole does not hesitate to call the murderer of Mr. Winnington and who is described by Cumberland as " a jack-pudding ready to his hand at any time," a judgment confirmed in the pages of *Chrysal.* " A more dirty animal than Thompson was never seen outside a pig-stye," adds Cumberland.[1] The diarist was himself a frequent visitor at La Trappe,[2] and occasionally Dodington's guest at Eastbury. There he would find such people as Lord Halifax, to whom he was then acting as occasional secretary, the Dowager Lady Strafford and old Lady Hervey : " Our splendid host," he writes, " was excelled by no man in doing the honours of his house and table ; to the ladies he had all the courtly and profound devotion of the Spaniard, with the ease and gaiety of a Frenchman towards the men. His mansion was magnificent,

[1] We have already met with Thompson in my account of Paul Whitehead.

[2] It had formerly been the residence of Lady Craven (the Margravine of Anspach), and was afterwards to be that of Queen Caroline, the wife of George IV., when it was known as Brandenburgh House.

massy, and stretching out to a great extent of front with an enormous portico . . . there were turrets and wings that went I know not whither, though now they are levelled with the ground. . . .[1] All this was exactly in unison with the taste of its magnificent owner, who had gilt and furnished the apartments with a profusion of finery that kept no terms with simplicity, and not always with elegance or harmony of style. . . . Mr. Dodington's town house in Pall Mall,[2] his villa at Hammersmith, and the mansion above described, were such establishments as few nobles were possessed of."

This passion for display and ostentation which was so marked a characteristic of Dodington is further exemplified by Cumberland when he goes on to say that in none of these mansions was he to be approached but through a suite of apartments, and that he was rarely to be found seated but beneath painted ceilings and gilt entablatures. " In his villa you were conducted through two rows of antique marble statues, ranged in a gallery floored with the rarest marbles, and enriched with columns of granite and lapis lazuli ; his saloon was hung

[1] Eastbury was later pulled down.

[2] " Dodington's house in Pall Mall stood close to the garden the Prince had bought there of Lord Chesterfield ; and during Dodington's favour the Prince had suffered him to make a door out of his house into his garden, which, upon the first decay of his interest, the Prince shut up—building and planting before Dodington's house, and changing every lock in his own to which he had formerly given Dodington keys " (*Lord Hervey's Memoirs*). Horace Walpole says : " Mr. Dodington built the house in Pall Mall which is now in front of Carlton House."

with the finest Gobelins tapestry, and he slept in a bed encanopied with peacocks' feathers in the style of Mrs. Montagu.[1] When he passed from Pall Mall to La Trappe it was always in a coach drawn by six fat unwieldy black horses, short docked and of colossal dignity. Neither was he less characteristic in apparel than in equipage ; he had a wardrobe loaded with rich and flaring suits . . . and every birthday [2] he added to the stock. In doing this he so contrived as never to put his old dresses out of countenance by any variation in the fashion of the new ; in the mean time his bulk and corpulency gave full display to a vast expanse and profusion of brocade and embroidery, and this, when set off with an enormous tye-periwig and deep laced ruffles, gave the picture of an ancient courtier in his gala habit, or Quin in his stage dress." He seems to be masquerading as Sir Fopling Flutter!

Being a man of humble birth, says Cumberland, he seemed to have an innate respect for titles, and " none bowed with more devotion to the robes and fasces of high rank and office ; " and it was this, no doubt, that largely actuated him in his political tergiversations ; he was determined always to be on the side of the angels of power, and he

[1] This refers, of course, to the famous room at Montagu House (now Portman House), which was hung with birds' feathers of all kinds : see the present author's *Private Palaces of London* for a description of this apartment.

[2] Every royal birthday that is, when the courtiers appeared in new clothes.

paid his court indiscriminately to Walpole and Bute, to Chesterfield and Winnington, to Pulteney and Fox, from the same motives as he aped in his household the manners of the *ancien noblesse* ; and, as he did everything, over-acted the part. His elaborate toilettes and his ridiculous Wardour Street decorations emanated from the same instinct as made him fulsome in his conversation with the great, and patronising to such men of letters as he knew would make him adulatory returns. Churchill pillories him in this respect, in his *Independence* :

> " Our patrons are of quite a different strain,
> With neither sense nor taste : against the grain
> They patronize for fashion's sake—no more—
> And keep a bard, just as they keep a whore.
> Melcombe (on such occasions I am loath
> To name the dead) was a rare proof of both."

A rich man in those days could always purchase applause, and even such men as Thomson and Young, and others who pandered to Dodington's furious passion for adulation, may be excused on the score of that poverty which then dogged the footsteps (*pace* the patron ; Johnson would have said because of him) of the literary aspirant. A Mæcenas was too much worth cultivating for the writer to question too curiously his moral character or his real motives for sustaining the part ; and Dodington who loved flattery laid on with a trowel was just the man to be cultivated by those whom the *res angusta domi* forced to put their self-respect in their pockets.

Before leaving the man and his wardrobe one more extract from Cumberland must be given—an extract which visualises him not, it must be remembered, in his earlier days of an unexpected and immense prosperity, but in his seventieth year, when one might have supposed vanity and ostentation had been laid aside.

"I had taken leave of Lord Melcombe," says the writer, "the day preceding the coronation, and found him before a looking-glass [1] in his new robes, practising attitudes and debating within himself upon the most graceful mode of carrying his coronet in the procession. He was in high glee with his fresh and blooming honours, and I left him in the act of dictating a *billet* to Lady Hervey, apprising her that a *young lord* was coming to throw himself at her feet."

History does not record how 'the young Lord' demeaned himself at the Coronation; but an anecdote tells what befel him when he went to pay his respects to Queen Charlotte, on her marriage to George III., in the same year. "As he approached to kiss the royal hand, decked in an embroidered suit of silk, with lilac waistcoat and breeches, the latter, in the act of kneeling down, forgot their duty, and broke loose from their moorings in a very indecorous manner."

[1] Readers of Meredith will remember the egregious Tinman and a similar episode in that most amusing story *The House on the Beach*. The Coronation referred to, by the way, was, of course, that of George III. Dodington had been created a peer, through Bute's influence, in the previous year.

Another anecdote, *à propos* not of his extravagances in clothes, but of the heavy vulgarity of the decorations in his house, indicates, besides, that a royal Duke could, on occasion, be witty: "He was one day exhibiting to the Duke of York (George III.'s brother) an upper apartment at La Trappe, the floor of which, in extreme bad taste, was inlaid with marble and supported heavy columns. 'Some people, Sir,' he remarked, 'tell me that this room should be on the ground floor.' —'Be easy, Mr. Dodington,' replied the Duke, 'it will soon be there.'"

We have been an unconscionable time bringing Dodington to Medmenham Abbey. Indeed, it is not easy to say when he first made acquaintance with that rural haunt of iniquity. Cumberland, who has so much to say about his friend, is discreetly silent on the matter. Perhaps he thought he had indicated his character sufficiently to show that wherever sin and a lord were gathered together Dodington would not be far off. However it may be, no mention of the Hell Fire Club, much less of an association between its monks and those of La Trappe, is indicated in Cumberland's pages; and it is again to *Chrysal* we must turn for what rather meagre details we shall find there concerning Dodington wonderingly posing in any garb less ostentatious than a court suit. At any rate, he must have been in his element, especially as he is

introduced to us there, as seated on the right hand of the Superior.

" At the right hand of the Superior you see one [1] whose example should be a warning to mankind never to be off their guard against the allurements of vice, while there is any possibility, however removed and improbable, of their falling into it." After saying that in his early days " his conduct had been regulated by the strictest regard to the principles of moral virtue " (in which I think our author protests somewhat overmuch), he proceeds : " But in the evening of his days, when all that heat and hurry give place to cool reflection, and the serenity of the prospect more than compensates for its approaching close, the whole scene was wretchedly reversed, and his setting sun overcast with a cloud of vices most blameable in any stage of life, but aggravated ten thousand-fold in his, to which they were unnatural," and he considers that vanity was the chief motive of this sad falling off.

Johnstone, indeed, here states a fact which is quite well recognised : that just as there is no fool like an old fool, so there is no rake like an old rake. Dodington was sixteen years older than Dashwood, forty years older than Churchill, thirty-six years older than Wilkes, and twenty-eight years older than Sandwich ; and it is therefore

[1] The identity of Bubb-Dodington is proved by the ' key ' to *Chrysal*, which is to be found in William Davis's *Olio of Bibliographical and Literary Anecdotes and Memoranda*, 1814.

obvious that he must have become a member of the Hell Fire Club at an age when the participation in orgies, which some compliant people may think to some extent forgivable in the young, is unnatural and should be distasteful.

According to the author of *Chrysal*, it was the Dr. Thompson before mentioned who was Dodington's bad genius so far as his moral deviations were concerned. And he thus accounts for the ascendancy the quack came to exercise over his patron :

" This man," he says, " who had thoroughly studied the human heart, soon saw that any direct attack on his patron would prove ineffectual. He therefore struck out a new scheme. . . . He disguised the strongest flattery under the mask of the most cynical bluntness and candour ; and instead of praising all he did, and echoing in assent every word he spoke, he missed no occasion of differing in opinion from him." The ruse seems to have been successful, for Dodington was just one of those men who love flattery but, thinking they see through it, are caught by a more subtle, and what may be termed more inverse, method. " Encouraged," proceeds our author, " by this success, he boldly ventured upon a stroke the event of which was to decide his hopes. In gratification to his own depraved taste, he had written a treatise in which the grossest libertinism was set in so advantageous and alluring a light,

and the arguments against it evaded with so much plausibility and true wit, as were almost sufficient to put virtue out of countenance, and debauch its sincerest votaries.

" He showed his book with a mysterious air to several of his patron's friends, giving them broad hints at the same time, but under the seal of secrecy, that he was the author of it . . . one whispered it to another, till, in a few days, the whole town was in the secret."

Dodington is represented as being at first mystified at this giant's robe which was being placed on his shoulders ; and then, as he heard the book praised, his vanity would not allow of his disowning its authorship—answering enquiries with coy evasions, and generally leading his friends to suppose that the report was well founded. Thompson thereupon told him that if the work was not actually written by him, it contained nothing but what he had frequently said on the subject, and therefore might logically be regarded as his.

" It is not difficult to persuade a willing mind. The patron could no longer deny what was so clearly proved, and what his own conscience bore testimony to, against his false modesty. All that remained was to act in such a manner that his practice should not contradict this declaration of his principles, and so raise a doubt of their authenticity. But after having made the first step, he found no difficulty in this. He directly changed

the whole tenour of his life. He laughed at morality, ridiculed religion; and professed vices he was unable to practise. And lastly, to complete his character, procured admission into this society,[1] which, as I have said, was the proof of every polite accomplishment and qualification, where he nods, as you see, over the grave, as insensible to the mirth and pleasures enjoyed by his companions, as of the despicableness and danger of his own situation."

Such a man as Dodington could be imposed upon without much difficulty, because he readily imposed on himself; he was, too, willing to be enrolled even in such a fraternity as that of Medmenham Abbey, because he found there an admixture of the nobility and the literary world; and if Dodington loved anything better than a lord it was an author. He delighted in playing the patron because it was an aristocratic thing to do, and also, let it be said, because he seems really to have had a taste for the conversation of literary men. By no means badly educated, he was indeed even well versed in ancient and modern history; and it will surprise some, who may overlook the strange contradiction in human nature, that the man who could delight in tailors could also delight in Tacitus. Cumberland says he was an elegant classical scholar, and extols the readiness of his wit, which seems to have relied for its vigour on its spontaneity; he was, adds his friend, "in nothing

[1] The Hell Fire Club.

more remarkable than in ready perspicuity and clear discernment of a subject thrown before him on a sudden ; take his first thoughts then, and he would charm you ; give him time to ponder and refine, you would perceive the spirit of his sentiments and the vigour of his genius evaporate by the process ;" and he illustrates this readiness by telling how, on one occasion when Henry Fox and Alderman Beckford were on a visit to Eastbury, Dodington, " in the happiest flow of his raillery and wit, combated the latter intrepid talker with admirable effect. It was an interlude truly comic and amusing. Beckford, loud, voluble, self-sufficient and galled by hits which he could not parry and probably did not expect, laid himself more and more open in the vehemence of his argument ; Dodington, lolling in his chair in perfect apathy and self-command, dozing and even snoring at intervals in his lethargic way, broke out every now and then into such gleams and flashes of wit and irony, as by the contrast of his phlegm with the other's impetuosity, made his humour irresistible and set the table in a roar."

It is known to everyone that Dodington wrote the diary to which I have already alluded ; he was also guilty of perpetrating certain verses which, however, he had the good sense to keep from the public gaze ;[1] and he also possessed a volume of

[1] His executor apparently destroyed these verses, many of which were of a characteristically indecent nature. See Moore's *Diary*, vol. 5, p. 96.

bons mots and repartees, some of which were his own, but which were for the most part gathered together from other sources. To this collection he was in the habit of referring ; rather like Sheridan, whose commonplace book of jokes Moore unblushingly revealed as the *fons et origo* of many an impromptu witticism.

Lord Macaulay once wrote of Dodington, that " he stood so low in public estimation that the only service he could have rendered to any government would have been to oppose it ; " and the famous diary dots the i's and crosses the t's of this pronouncement.

It is so common a volume that there can hardly be a second-hand bookshop which cannot produce it on demand, and for this reason there is the less need for me to say anything at great length concerning its contents. It so happens, however, that I possess a copy which has a special interest, for it is one which contains Horace Walpole's illuminating *marginalia,* apparently taken from his own copy. It has an added value, too, from the fact that it was once in the library of Holland House and bears the historic book-plate of its renowned owner. Sheridan may have made his joke about its author ; Rogers may have complacently regarded its typography ; Macaulay may have hurriedly glanced down its pages ; Sydney Smith may have made it the subject of one of his exquisitely droll prelections. But its chief interest

lies in the fact that Horace Walpole has enriched its pages with notes, and it must have been a similar copy he had been perusing when he wrote to Conway his conclusion that " never was such a composition of vanity, versatility, and servility." But more than this: as if with an idea of some day suggesting the publication of another edition, Horace has himself added a long appendix consisting of the ' Memorial ' sent to General Hawley in December 1752, and incorporating, as Dodington himself says, " a sort of representation or remonstrance to the King from the whig nobility and gentry; setting forth their great concern and apprehension for the Prince's education from the hands in which he now is," etc. " What was the effect," remarks Dodington, " I can't tell; but I know they were very much intrigued to find out whence it came and who wrote it." " It was H(orace) W(alpole), Junr.," writes Horace in a note in the margin. In addition to this interesting little revelation of secret literary and political history, we have a " Brief account of George Bubb Doddington " (*sic*), signed " H. W., June 7th, 1784," as well as another longer memoir of the diarist, written for, and published in, the *European Magazine* for that month, also from Walpole's hand.

The political portion of the diary does not here concern us, nor need I recapitulate Walpole's reflections on the author's intrigues; but one or

two instances are given of his wit, in the gossip's clear Horatian hand, and these may aptly help to bring this chapter to a close.

" Lord Sundon was Commissioner of the Treasury with him (Dodington) and Winnington, and was very dull. One Thursday as they left the Board, Lord Sundon laughed heartily at something Dodington said, and when gone, Winnington said, ' Dodington, you are very ungrateful; you call Sundon stupid and slow, and yet you see how quick he took what you said;'—' Oh! no;' replied Dodington, ' he was only laughing now at what I said last Treasury day.' "

Here is another instance of what passed for wit in a rich man :

" Mr. Trenchard, a neighbour, telling him that though his pinery was expensive, he contrived, by applying the fire and the manure to other purposes, to make it so advantageous that he believed he got a shilling by every pine-apple he ate—' Sir,' said Dodington, ' I would eat them for half the money.' "

The last instance I will give seems to show more observation than wit, but Walpole adduces it as an instance of the latter quality :

" Dodington was very lethargic; falling asleep one day after dinner with Sir Richard Temple and Lord Cobham, the latter reproached Dodington with his drowsiness; Dodington denied having been asleep, and to prove he had not, offered to

repeat all that Lord Cobham had been saying. Cobham challenged him to do so. Dodington repeated a story, and Lord Cobham owned he had been telling it. 'Well,' said Dodington, 'and yet I did not hear a word of it, but I went to sleep because I knew that about this time you would tell that story!'"

On one occasion Walpole, writing to Mann (November 15th, 1742), remarked: "Mr. Dodington has at last owned his match with his old mistress. I suppose he wants a new one;" and thereby hangs a tale, which one can piece together from the same inveterate gossip's record. It appears that there was a certain Mrs. Strawbridge, "a very handsome black woman," who lived at the corner house in Savile Row. Dodington was greatly attracted by the lady (on whom he had written a ballad[1]—probably destroyed with his other poetic effusions), and he obtained an assignation with her: "He found her lying on a couch. But, whether he had not expected so kind a reception, or was not so impatient to precipitate the conclusion of the romance, he kneeled down, and seizing her hand, cried, 'Oh, that I had you but in a wood!'—'In a wood,' cried the astonished Statira; 'what would you do—rob me?'" However, then, or afterwards, that interlude produced

[1] Apparently another ballad had been composed on Mrs. Strawbridge, by Nicholas Rowe, to the same tune as that used by Lord Bath for his famous one on 'Strawberry Hill.' See Walpole's *Letters* (Toynbee), vol. 3, p. 321.

an arrangement, and he gave her a bond of ten thousand pounds, to be paid if he married anybody else.[1]

In the meanwhile he was living with a certain Mrs. Beghan or Behan, and all the world thought that she was his mistress. However, when Mrs. Strawbridge died, Dodington, to the wonder of everyone, acknowledged that he was married to Mrs. Beghan, and had been for the previous seventeen years. This acknowledgment was made in 1742,[2] as we have seen; so that Dodington must have married the lady when he was thirty-four.

The episode of Dodington's kneeling to Mrs. Strawbridge has a companion picture in his kneeling to the King, and in one of Walpole's manuscript notes to the diary, there is this marginal reference on the author's statement (Oct. 1st, 1749), that he "kissed the King's hand at Kensington, and was civilly received;" "Mr. Dodington had changed sides so often, and been so often in and out of place, that at this time, when he had left the King a second time for the Prince, he was, or said he was, much afraid of being *rumped*" (the fashionable expression then) "by the King—but instead of being angry, the King, when he saw Dodington, old, fat and unwieldy, kneel down with difficulty to kiss his hand, burst out into a

[1] Walpole to Lady Ossory, February 1st, 1787.

[2] Walpole in 1744 asked Mann if he had told him of the fact. He had forgotten his letter of two years previously.

violent fit of laughter." It is known that George II. took with great equanimity the tergiversations of this politician *pour rire.* "I see Dodington at court, sometimes," he once remarked; "what does he come for?"

Indeed, Dodington was a veritable shuttle-cock; at one time consenting to be rolled up in a blanket and precipitated down a staircase, for the amusement of Fritz at Clivedon; at another making his court to an indifferent King at St. James's. At last his time-serving and his ostentatious display came to the appointed end, and he died, on July 28th, 1762, in his seventy-second year, leaving a memory which, in spite of the fulsome panegyric inscribed by Thomas Wyndham, his heir, on an ionic pillar at Hammersmith, shows an amazing compound of opposite qualities. Lord Hervey, who it must be remembered was a partial judge, says of him that "he, whilst some people have the *je ne sais quoi* in pleasing, possessed the *je ne sais quoi* in displeasing, in the strongest and most universal degree that ever any man was blest with that gift. . . . He was one of those unfortunate people whom it was the fashion to abuse, and ungenteel to be seen with. . . . His vanity in company was so overbearing, so insolent, and so insupportable, that he seemed to exact that applause as his due which other people solicit, and to think he had a right to make every auditor his admirer."

Walpole, a more impartial critic, thus sums up his character: "He was better as a private gentleman than a politician. In one point of view, he was free, easy and engaging; in the other, intriguing, close and reserved. His reigning passion was to be well at Court. To this object he sacrificed every circumstance of his life. To obtain this, he hazarded and lost every advantage of his fortune, character, and influence. His talents, his fortune, his rank, and his connections were sufficient to have placed him in a very elevated situation in life, had he regarded his own character and the advantages that belonged to him: by neglecting these, he passed through the world without much satisfaction to himself, and no advantage to his Country."

As we have seen, his patronage was able to secure him the friendship, or at least the adulation, of men like Thomson and Glover, Mallet, and Paul Whitehead and even Fielding; but Churchill held him up to obloquy; the sturdy independent Johnson scorned the offer of his acquaintance, and Sir Charles Hanbury Williams once wrote of him:

> "A false, suspicious friend was he,
> As all the world can tell.
> He flattered Walpole at Whitehall,
> And damned him in Pall Mall."

Such was the man whom Foote made to adorn a tale, and Browning to point a moral![1]

[1] Hogarth caricatured him twice: once in his "Five Orders of Periwigs," and again in "Chairing the Members," where he is the corpulent occupant of the chair.

CHAPTER XI

GEORGE SELWYN

HAD it not been for the fact that George Selwyn's name appears in the list of members of the Hell Fire Club, I should not have dreamed of including it in these studies of the rakes. That he was a gambler we know ; everyone in society in those days was, very nearly ; that his relations with the fair sex were not wholly platonic, we have Maria Fagniani to witness ; that he heard the chimes at midnight, if not in Clement's Inn at least at White's and Brooks's, is quite notorious. But such things do not make a man necessarily a rake—and a rake in the ordinary accepted term of the word—the term, that is, under which practically all the rest treated of in these volumes come—he was not. But—he was a member of the Medmenham set ; and he has another connection with it in that that profane frolic at Oxford, the result of youthful thoughtlessness rather than engrained depravity, which caused him to be sent down, has been suggested as perhaps

originating in Sir Francis Dashwood's brain the idea of his Franciscan brotherhood.

It will be surmised from what I have said that, to use Macaulay's words with regard to Leigh Hunt, I " have a kindness " for George Selwyn. I confess I have ; and I will go further and state that had the other rakes of the Hell Fire Club possessed hearts as true, affections as kindly, wit as exquisite, manners as irreproachable, I am afraid these pages would not have been so intriguing as the absence of these qualities in the protagonists of the various chapters may, perhaps, cause some to think them.

It does, I confess, seem somewhat of an anomaly to present a man as a rake and then to have no unbecoming stories to tell of him ; to arraign him, so to speak, at the bar of morality and then to lack evidence on which to convict him. On the other hand it will be a change, from having necessarily to harp overmuch on one string, to talk for a little about a man who, considering his times and his position, was, if not exactly a saint, certainly not a very terrible sinner ; and whose modicum of irregular pleasure was such as safely (or so one likes to think) to enable him to shelter under Charles the Second's famous supposition.

I state quite frankly that of Selwyn's connection with the Hell Fire Club I have discovered nothing, save the essential fact that he was a member. None of his biographers says a word about the

matter; even the author of *Chrysal* does not mention him, or even indirectly refer to him in this respect. But as he was a man endowed with a great curiosity for the *arcana* of life—and death, by the way—it is probable that he joined the fraternity from that motive; just as some people join secret societies. A study of his life and character, however, does not enable me to visualise him as partaking in the orgies and irregularities of the set, either with the ingenuity of a Dashwood, the robustious activity of a Wilkes, or the disillusioned devil-may-care-dom of a Churchill. What *symposia* he may have attended must, however, have been hilarious, for where George Selwyn was, there too was wit—wit so refined, so subtle, that in a less polished environment it might have missed its mark—the wit of the rapier which does its work on the diaphragm before the victim has realised the thrust; the wit that requires that instant recognition only to be accorded by the alert and nimble-minded. Much grossness and indecency must have been foiled by such a delicately handled and delicate weapon; and all one can say is that it is a pity for its reputation that the Hell Fire Club did not comprise among its members more men like George Augustus Selwyn.

The main facts of Selwyn's not specially eventful life may be given in quite a short summary; for it is his relations with society, his wit and his perennial good humour which concern us here, rather than

his career as a Member of Parliament, or his other political activities, such as they were—none of which he took very seriously and in none of which he made a name.

He was the second son of Colonel John Selwyn, of Matson, near Gloucester, his mother having been a daughter of General Farrington, of a Kentish family, and was born on August 11th, 1719. It is interesting to know that Colonel Selwyn had been an aide-de-camp to Marlborough and was a friend of Sir Robert Walpole; while Mrs. Selwyn had been a Woman of the Bedchamber to Queen Caroline; so that hereditarily George was in a way connected with the Army, the Ministry and the Court. Matson, where George spent his childhood, is a small but interesting house standing on high ground overlooking Gloucester, and not far from Llanthony Priory, whose ruins are now almost obliterated and whose name is better remembered in connection with the more important monastic institution in Wales (an offshoot of the smaller foundation), to-day chiefly associated with the name of Walter Savage Landor.

Selwyn was sent to Eton, where Gray and Horace Walpole were among his schoolfellows; but it was George Montagu who appears in those days to have been his special crony. There is little or nothing recorded of Selwyn's Eton life, and he is not even mentioned in Creasy's *Eminent Etonians*.

From Eton he went up to Hertford College, Oxford (Hart's Hall it was then called) in 1739; and it was apparently during his first 'long vacation' that he and Montagu joined Walpole in France, foregathering with the latter at Rheims in July of that year and being with him again at Paris in the following year. West, as well as Walpole, was throughout his life greatly attached to Selwyn, and even so early as 1741 we find him writing to the latter, *à propos* of some illness of Selwyn's: "I always loved him. There's a sweetness in his temper, and a justness in his understanding, that please me."

The career of George Selwyn, or 'Bosky,' as his friends called him, at the University was hardly a propitious one. "Hertford," says one authority,[1] "was in the middle of the Eighteenth Century a college where the so-called students neither toiled at books nor at physical exercises. They passed a short and merry time at the University, fashioned as nearly as might be on the mode of life of a man about town." Indeed, George seems to have done pretty much as he liked, and, as he had already secured through someone's influence the sinecure post of what was termed Clerk of the Irons and Surveyor of the Meltings in the Mint,[2] he could afford to follow his own devices, although

[1] *Life of Selwyn*, by Roscoe and Clergue.

[2] The duties were performed by deputy, and Selwyn only occasionally appeared at the weekly dinners provided at the public expense for the department!

we know that he was certainly hard up for money, in Paris, at the beginning of 1743. He had probably already begun to gamble. Two years later he got into a much more serious scrape.

In a letter from a Captain Nicholson addressed to him, on November 12th, 1745, we get an account of the details of this escapade. Nicholson, who expresses himself as "an enemy to tyranny and oppression," relates to Selwyn the version of the story as far as he had been able to gather it from various sources, which was, he writes, "that being at the Club, you sent to a silversmith's for a chalice, which he had got from some church to repair, which being brought, you filled with wine, and desired the master of the house to drink success to the Club; which being done, you gave it to him again, and said, drink this in remembrance of me; after which you put a bottle of wine under your arm, and did let it dribble into the cup; upon which some of the company withdrew; by which means it came to light, and the depositions of the whole company, except one, were taken, who deposed to the above effect; whereupon, a numerous convocation of above two hundred were called, and the depositions of your accusers read, and the only defence you made was by a letter to the Vice-Chancellor, artfully and well-wrote, setting forth your innocence." Selwyn's excuse, which was apparently correct, was that he had been drinking; but this was regarded as no

justification, and he was unanimously expelled and sentenced not to come within five miles of Oxford. It would seem that he so far disregarded the sentence as to return to the Seat of Learning, and to threaten to take legal action against the authorities. "They say," continues Nicholson, "you have threatened them with law; whereupon they offered you copies of the depositions against you, which you declined, and that, if you stir in the affair, the Vice-Chancellor will trouble himself no further than to print those depositions. They say your own friends condemn you in the affair: they accuse you of drawing the figures of the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors in an indecent posture, and of buying a debt in order to have it in your power to arrest a Proctor, which you did." "This," adds Nicholson, "is their cant, which I tell you exactly as they tell it, that you may the better judge what use to make of it; and that you may speedily put your enemies in confusion is my sincere and hearty wish."

Although the authorities put about the statement that Selwyn's own friends condemned his action—and it was certainly irreverent enough for them rightly to have done so—those who knew all the circumstances thought he had been dealt with unfairly, and Sir Charles Hanbury Williams (hardly perhaps to be regarded as a *censor morum*) and others, Nicholson, as we see, among them, were of the same opinion, an opinion shared even by

some of the dons. Be this as it might, it was an unfortunate episode, and it took Selwyn a number of years in which to persuade people that it was not a characteristic action, but merely one of those silly ebullitions to which young men, especially when they have drunk more than is good for them, thoughtlessly give vent.

The episode has its interest for us here, since it has, as I have already said, been regarded as the prototype of one portion of those irregular and profane proceedings with which the Hell Fire Club was to be identified. Colonel Selwyn, in his Matson fastness, bore it hard, and during his lifetime George was never able wholly to regain his good opinion.

Having been expelled from Oxford, Selwyn took up his residence in London, and commenced that career as a man of fashion and as a wit by which he is now chiefly known. He fixed his residence at White's, where he had been elected a member of the 'Young Club,' as it was termed, in 1744; and that he used it as his headquarters is proved by the fact that all his letters were addressed to him there. His father, when in London, resided at his house in Cleveland Court, off Cleveland Row —that famous house in which Walpole and Townshend had had their historic quarrel, a quarrel which gave point to the affray between Peachum and Lockit. It is supposed that George thus found White's convenient for making advances to his

father, with whom *he* had quarrelled over the Oxford incident.

Three years later Selwyn became Member for the family borough of Ludgershall, which he continued to represent until he transferred his allegiance to Gloucester, whose burgesses he represented from 1754 to 1780.

Here, then, we have him settled in London as a man of fashion and a wit on whose lips were continually hovering those clever remarks which, bandied about during his own day and repeated since, have placed him among the best of the sayers of good things; and it was probably about this time that he became a member of the Medmenham Franciscans. If his Oxford exploit was really the suggestive hint on which Dashwood based his fraternity, he seems to have been content to rest on his laurels as a pioneer; for we have no record of his taking an active part in the *saturnalia* of the Hell Fire Club; nor was he quite the sort of man to be at home in such orgies; and he was far better pleased to be gambling, in a quiet and relatively mild way, at White's, or in passing thence, with some *bon mot* on his lips, to Brooks's (he was elected a member there in 1764); in attending a meeting of the Jockey Club or the Dilettanti (for his interests were varied); and even in wandering into that "jovial Club," as his friend Gilly Williams terms it, "the Thursday Night Club," which met at the Star and Garter in Pall

Mall, and where he would encounter such diverse personalities as those of Lord March (the Old Q of later days) and Sir Joshua Reynolds, than to be indulging in the silly pranks of the Medmenham monks.

His friends, too, were as the sands of the sea. Horace Walpole, Gilly Williams, Lord Carlisle, for whom he had a kind of almost paternal affection, Lord March, Townshend ; there is no need to enumerate them, a list of them all would fill pages, for there is hardly a man or woman of fashion, hardly a statesman or a dilettante, hardly a single famous or notorious person, from Betty the flower-woman of St. James's Street, up and down the social scale which ran from the palace to the prison, whom Selwyn did not know ; and few who did not regard him with as much tenderness as it was in the Eighteenth Century trend of mind to exhibit or feel.

He himself, if not a man of many deep affections, had a few, and among them was his devotion to ' Mie Mie,' the Maria Fagniani who was later to marry Lord Hertford and of whom both Selwyn and Lord March supposed, or at least asserted, themselves to be the father. Selwyn adopted the child and exhibited towards her a care and devotion which seemed extraordinary to those who did not realise the love of which he was capable, and which he never gave to any other woman. There is something beautiful in this affection of the man



GEORGE SELWYN.

[*face p.* 240.]

about town for the little girl who was the light of his life ; and when her Italian relations claimed her, his grief and dismay were uncontrollable. He became miserable at the thought of separation, so miserable indeed that his friends had to do their utmost to alleviate his grief, in fear that it would seriously affect his health ; and it is characteristic of another and more curious side to his character that Anthony Storer could think of no better way of alleviating his suffering, and turning his mind into a more congenial channel, than by sending him a full and detailed account of the execution of Dr. Dodd. For, as every reader of Eighteenth Century annals is aware, Selwyn had a perfect passion for executions and such-like gruesome circumstances. He would go anywhere and take any amount of trouble to pander to this morbid craving ; and many of the stories that are extant about him have a bearing on this curious idiosyncrasy. The famous remark of Lord Holland when dying sums up Selwyn's character alike in its friendliness and in its morbidity : " If Mr. Selwyn calls," he said to his servant, " show him up : if I am alive I shall be very pleased to see him ; and if I am dead I am sure he will be very pleased to see me."

He had such a love of horrors that when Damiens was to be executed in Paris he went over purposely to witness the awful sight. Arrived at the scene, he got as near as he could to the scaffold, when the

executioner, observing him, cried out: "Faites place pour Monsieur; c'est un Anglais et un amateur." He was full of strange information about such things: he once told Walpole that Arthur Moore had his coffin chained to that of his mistress. "Lord!" exclaimed Horace, "how do you know that?" "Why, I saw them the other day in the vaults of St. Giles's;" and he was once accosted by one of the officials at the Abbey with, "Your servant, Mr. Selwyn. I expected to see *you* here the other day when the old Duke of Richmond's body was taken up." Everyone in London knew of George's *penchant*; and it was some wicked wit who inserted a paragraph in the paper to the effect that when the body of Miss Ray was exhibited, Mr. Selwyn sat at its head, dressed in the flowing weeds of the professional mourner; a fact that cannot, however, be substantiated, although Selwyn was probably quite capable of doing it. His love of executions was notorious, and few of note passed without his attendance. Someone, *à propos*, rallied him on going to see Lord Lovat's head cut off, to which he retorted: "I made full amends; I went to see it sewn on again." Well might Walpole remark that "Selwyn never thought but *à la tête tranchée*."

But, these and an hundred similar anecdotes have been repeated times out of number. The Lovat incident, or rather the retort it produced, brings me conveniently to George Selwyn's wit,

a pleasanter subject than his delight in death and its accessories. One of his best retorts also, in a way, links up the two. There was a low criminal executed at Tyburn, whose name, like that of the statesman, was Charles Fox. Selwyn was asked if he had been to see the man hanged: "No," he replied, "I make a point never to attend rehearsals."

Some of Selwyn's best *mots* had a political flavour, as befitted a Member of Parliament of so many years' standing. When Fox said, one day at Brooks's, that he had made an advantageous peace with France and had persuaded that country to give up the *gum* trade to England: "I am not at all surprised at that, Charles," he exclaimed, "for having drawn your teeth they would be damned fools to quarrel with you about your *gums*."

When told that Fox was much attracted by Mrs. Robinson, he said: "Well, whom should the 'man of the people' live with but the woman of the people?" When the same statesman had ruined himself by excessive gambling, and a subscription was being raised for him, someone wondered 'how he would take it.' "Take it?" said Selwyn, "why, quarterly to be sure."

If much depended on Selwyn's rather lazy way of enunciating his good things, as was no doubt the case, at the same time many of them are in themselves excellent examples of readiness of perception and a sort of intellectual power of hitting off situations by an 'aproposism.' Dining

once with Bruce, the famous Abyssinian traveller, the latter told the company how he believed he only saw one *lyre* there. "Yes," was Selwyn's whispered aside, "and there's one less since he left the country;" and there is the well-known story of his walking one day with Lord Pembroke, and meeting a lot of chimney-sweeps' boys who began to beg of him. Stopping and gazing at them with the utmost seriousness, he remarked: "I have often heard of the sovereignty of the people; I suppose your Highnesses are in court mourning."

There was something of the Sydney Smith touch in many of his witticisms; a sudden illuminatory expression, which lighted up a subject, so that his agile-minded hearers could see all kinds of possible permutations arising from it; as when, hearing that Lord North had married the immensely fat relict of the Earl of Rockingham, he remarked: "Oh! she had been kept in ice for three days before the wedding."

Many more such evidences of his wit could be adduced; but they are too well known to stand repetition. Like Bubb-Dodington (although in nothing else like him), he was one of those men who seem perpetually half asleep and who yet come out with startlingly apposite remarks, as witty as unexpected. Nothing disturbed his equanimity, unless it was the news that Mie Mie was unwell. He could sleep after losing, almost during losing, large sums at pharaoh or whist; in the House of

Commons his somnolence was as proverbial as that of Lord North or the late Duke of Devonshire. Indeed, as a parliamentarian he did little more than vote for his party, and was like so many of his fellow country members in everything but the possession of wit and the knowledge, curiously complete, of a man of the world.

His father, old Colonel Selwyn, had died in 1751, through grief, it is believed, at the death of his elder son in the same year ; and thus George came into the Gloucestershire property for his life-time, it having been entailed by the Colonel on the descendants of his daughter, Mrs. Townshend. He also inherited the house in Cleveland Court, but preferred living at one he had taken in Chesterfield Street, although he was destined to die in the former.

When that event took place, on January 25th, 1791, Selwyn was found to have accumulated quite a considerable fortune for those days ; and he was able to leave his adored Mie Mie the comfortable sum of £33,000. The Duke of Queensberry (the Lord March of earlier days) left her a far larger amount, and made her husband, Lord Yarmouth, later to become the notorious Marquis of Hertford, his residuary legatee ; so that Mie Mie was in every way (except perhaps in her husband) well provided for ; and the fact of being the putative daughter of two rich men proved to have very solid advantages.

There is something in Selwyn's character which

cannot quite fail to appeal to us. He possessed many of the qualities of a rake. His life was largely passed in the hot meretricious atmosphere of gambling hells and even less reputable haunts; he was an intimate of the Old Q of legend; a partaker in the orgies (in a half-hearted, rather sleepy sort of way, one imagines) of the Hell Fire Club; he had begun his career by an incident which, regarded in the most impartial light, was an unseemly one; and to sum up, he was essentially of his period, that period when the man of fashion lived largely for the indulgence of his own appetites and the ruin of other people of both sexes. He was a gambler, and he fostered gambling in others (one remembers how annoyed he was when someone tried to get young Wilberforce out of his clutches), and he was in many respects the kind of man who to-day would be looked upon askance by the *unco guid* of a rather hypocritical generation. But on the other hand, he had his virtues—his sound common-sense and a rather unusual power of self-control; he was good natured and easy in his manners, seldom disturbed and never irritable; and he had a genius for friendship and at least one deep and abiding affection. He was, too, a man of much charm of manner and of a wit at once mordant and illuminating, but never exactly bitter or ill-humoured. Among a vast crowd of the illustrious and notorious, struggling for place and avid for power, he passes, a quiet ambitionless

figure, or at least if with ambition, not ambition for himself but for his friends. He loved society and lived for and in it. Nothing he enjoyed more than uttering his good things to a circle of club acquaintances or whispering some more than usually expressive *bon mot* in the ears of one or two special friends.

With such a combination of social qualities, it is not difficult to understand the popularity George Selwyn enjoyed during a long life; and when his friend Storer wrote, at the time of his death, "a more good-natured man or a more pleasant one never, I believe, existed; the loss is not only a private one to his friends, but really a public one to society in general," he but voiced the sentiments of that world of fashion to whom Selwyn was always 'my dear George.' Horace Walpole, whose intimacy with him was life-long and who, perhaps, knew him better than anyone, wrote to Lady Ossory: "I have had another and grievous memento, the death of poor Selwyn! His end was lonely, most composed and rational. From eight years old I have known him intimately without a cloud between us; few knew him so well, and consequently few knew so well the goodness of his heart and nature."

Many men who have made great names in the world might well envy such an epitaph, for it indicates a quality greater than greatness; and we may well forget the rake in the exquisite wit and the trusty friend.

CHAPTER XII

SOME LESSER KNOWN MEMBERS OF THE HELL FIRE CLUB

I HAVE now said something about the protagonists of the Hell Fire Club; those, I mean, who either took a leading part in its orgies or who, from the fact that they have left names in other directions, may be properly regarded as outstanding members of the fraternity. But, as we know, there were twelve Franciscans in addition to the superior (Sir Francis Dashwood), and therefore there are five more to be accounted for. The names of these were Sir William Stanhope, Sir James Dashwood-King, Henry Lovibond Collins, Benjamin Bates, and Sir John d'Aubrey. With the exception of the first, none of these made any name in the world; not even does the *Dictionary of National Biography*, ramparted about as it is with two large supplements, mention them, and their names might well have become wholly forgotten had they not been enrolled among the Medmenham set, and thus hung on

perilously and not at all gratifyingly to the more recondite annals of their period. So little indeed is known about these men (with the one exception mentioned) that even in such full and gossiping records of the eighteenth century as Horace Walpole's letters or Wraxall's memoirs, and such like treasure houses of scandal, do their names appear ; and I cannot think therefore that even a more exhaustive search than I have been able to make is likely to add materially to our knowledge of men whose characters (from the one fact we do know about them) were of that negative kind which led them into following those endowed with more robust natures into profligate excesses. They form the rank and file which is generally to be found influenced by more dominant minds ; the kind of men who are necessary to the rôle of leaders among the rulers of mankind, as without them there could be no leaders.

Of one of them, however, we do know a little, although to be sure not very much ; and Sir William Stanhope, to whom I refer, comes before us as at least something of a wit and the presupposition of being a determined profligate through his membership of the Hell Fire Club. He was a brother of the Earl of Chesterfield, and for some reason he had been created a Knight of the Bath ; *à propos* of which a remark he once made may be recorded. At the Coronation of George III., the authorities had removed the table of the Knights for some

purpose of their own, at which the members were not unnaturally much annoyed. No one more so than Sir William, who remarked that he considered they had been very ill treated, "*for some of us*," he exclaimed, "*are gentlemen.*" But a better known story concerning him is that which tells how when Lady Archibald Hamilton, the mistress of Frederick, Prince of Wales, had filled Carlton House with members of her husband's clan, Sir William was accustomed on meeting there anyone whom he did not know, to address them with: "Your humble servant, Mr. or Mrs. Hamilton." [1] The witticism came to the ears of Prince Fritz, who at last told Stanhope that his company was not quite agreeable in Pall Mall.

When, or under what circumstances, Stanhope became a Franciscan is not recorded; but at least we know that he was not one of those who turned actively on their old associate John Wilkes, as did Dashwood and Sandwich. Indeed, he offered his ears for him on one occasion—although to be sure he had no use for them. The incident is thus described. During the Wilkes prosecution, someone suggested in the House of Commons that Wilkes should be placed in the pillory so that his face should become known to the populace; whereupon another member added that he was so ugly that he would look better without his ears. Stanhope, who was very deaf and had to use an ear-trumpet,

[1] Walpole.

at once exclaimed: "If they want a pair of ears, they had better take mine, for they are of no use to me."

But perhaps Stanhope is best known as the successor to Pope of that famous 'villa' at Twickenham which the 'wicked wasp' had taken such pains to improve and beautify, and whose gardens, small as they were, were long famous for their groves and grottos. Stanhope bought the place on the poet's death and employed Kent to add wings to the house and otherwise to decorate it, so that Walpole told Mann the interior reminded him of those of some of the Florentine palaces. But he did other things which were not to Horace's taste by any means. On the advice of his son-in-law, Wellbore Ellis,[1] he hacked and hewed away Pope's groves, formed with so much care and thought, and he made winding gravel walks through them, "with an edging of shrubs, in what they call modern taste," writes disgusted Walpole. But it must not be forgotten that he also added another piece of ground on the other side of the high road, and constructed a second sub-way communicating with it; and that over the entrance to this Lord Clare wrote these lines:

> "The humble roof, the garden's scanty line,
> Ill suit the genius of the bard divine;
> But Fancy now displays a fairer scope,
> And Stanhope's plans unfold the soul of Pope."

[1] He had married Stanhope's only daughter by his first wife.

Walpole thought it was just the opposite ; but *quot homines tot sententiæ.*

It is interesting to remember that the ' gentle Thames ' links up the old monastic building near Marlow with the still more famous poetic home at Twickenham, and the water that flows past the one is the same as has rippled with less volume through the upper reaches where the ghosts of the later Franciscans must still, one thinks, haunt those shy recesses. But there was little fear of Stanhope attempting to put in practice at Pope's villa, with the master of Strawberry Hill within a stone's throw, what he had learned elsewhere on the silent highway of history.

Stanhope married twice ; his second wife (some say his third) was Anne, daughter of Francis Blake Delaval, and sister of Sir Francis Delaval, a lady who was later destined to be linked up with another rakish circle—that of the Regency—as she married, after Sir William's death, Captain Charles Morris, the well-known song writer and laureate (one may say) of the sweet shady side of Pall Mall. Walpole writing to Mann, in Florence, thus refers to Sir William and his bride—apparently an ill-assorted pair : " We sent you Sir William Stanhope and my lady, a fond couple ; you have returned them to us very different. When they came to Blackheath, he got out of the chaise to go to his brother, Lord Chesterfield's, made her a low bow, and said, ' Madam, I hope I shall never see your face again.'

She replied, ' Sir, I will take all the care I can that you never shall.' He lays no gallantry to her charge." It would not be very wonderful if he did, considering the disproportion of their ages, of which he was so sensible that, finding her extremely alarmed the first night, he said, " It is I, Madam, that have most reason to be frightened."

So much for Sir William Stanhope. There is even less to be gleaned concerning the others. Sir Thomas Stapleton was a cousin of Sir Francis Dashwood, and was a member of the family which has been for so long connected with Greys Court near Henley. The baronetcy to which he succeeded dated from 1679. He married Mary, daughter of H. Fane, Esq., of Wormsley, Oxfordshire, whom we meet as a widow in the pages of Mrs. Lybbe Powys's fascinating diary,[1] in which, by the way, there is an interesting account of the church at West Wycombe, which Lord le Despencer built, as well as a list of the members of the Hell Fire Club. A few references to Stapleton are to be found in Wilkes's[2] correspondence, but nothing to our purpose here, unfortunately.

Another relation of Dashwood's, who was also a member of the Franciscans, was Sir John Dash-

[1] It was edited by my old friend, Mrs. Cleminson (*née* Montagu) in 1899.

[2] The *cradle* in which Wilkes is said always to have slept in at Medmenham Abbey was in existence when Miss Berry visited Mrs. Scott at Danesfield, close by, in 1811.

wood-King, his half-brother, who is said to have been the last survivor of the fraternity. But of the personality of Benjamin Bates and Henry Lovibond Collins nothing appears to be known, and their names come down to us in the *gurgite vasto* of that amazing century, in the swirl of which so many, perhaps interesting, characters have become as forgotten as if they had never been. There was one member who shares this fate, but of whom we are told one significant thing. This was a certain Sir John d'Aubrey ; and we are informed that he was only present at a few meetings of the Hell Fire Club, *as being too young*.

Now, when we hold up our hands in horror at the idea which prompted the formation of this society and the profane and immoral rites that were practised by its members, we should, I think, place this one (it is the only one I have been able to discover) extenuating circumstance to the credit of the fraternity. They were unwilling that youth should be contaminated and innocence outraged ; and I have little doubt that the few meetings to which young d'Aubrey was admitted were not such as materially to shock the susceptibilities of either innocence or youth. I may be wrong, but after being obliged to say so many hard things about the Franciscans, I clutch at what seems to me one small point in their favour, and I think and hope the charitable will do so too.

I wanted to end on this note, but alas ! my best

of intentions is frustrated by my memory, and this often inconvenient attribute whispers to me that I ought to refer, at least for a moment, to a man who is not credited (if one can use such a neologism in this connection) with a direct association in the Medmenham orgies ; but whose influence on one of the members is generally regarded as disastrous—I mean Thomas Potter, a son of an Archbishop of Canterbury, a Member of Parliament, but one whom Almon, in his life of Wilkes, regarded as the worst of the set which surrounded the demagogue, and the chief corrupter of his morals. There was another man who thought as badly of him, and that was Churchill, who pilloried him in some of his stinging satires. Potter, we are told, possessed great parliamentary talents and many brilliant accomplishments ; but having offended his father by an imprudent marriage, and being idolized by his dissolute companions, nothing was too sacred to escape his ridicule ; and abilities which might have done honour to any station were degraded by him to obtain the reputation of a wit.[1] Churchill links him with William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester,[2] of whom he says that

> " He drank with drunkards, lived with sinners,
> Herded with infidels for dinners ;
> With such an emphasis and grace
> Blasphemed, that Potter kept no pace."

[1] Tooke.

[2] A proud and rather supercilious man, but not guilty of the enormities Churchill charges him with.

Some say that the *Essay on Woman* was first sketched by Potter, who is also supposed to have been responsible for the notes to that notorious work.

Potter was for a time Secretary to the Princess of Wales, a post he held till the death of Prince Fritz. On the strength of two speeches he made, one on the Seaforth election and the other on the contest between the towns of Buckingham and Aylesbury on the question of the assizes, Walpole opined that he promised "very greatly;" but it was but a flash in the pan; and although he did succeed in being appointed Paymaster-General and Joint Vice-Treasurer of Ireland in 1756, he never made a more outstanding political name, and when he died three years later he was remembered only for his profanity and general dissoluteness—as the unworthy son of a great churchman and the corrupter of the morals of John Wilkes.

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